Don't Say Any More, Darling

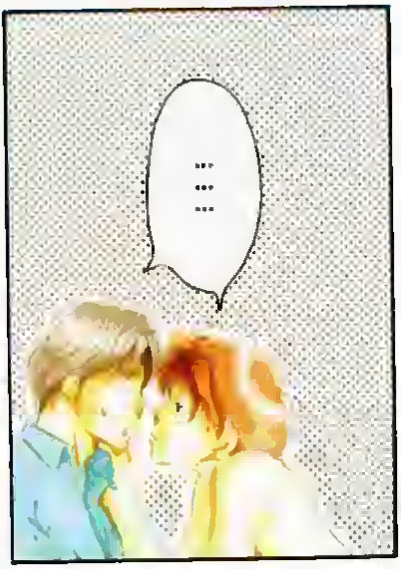
Fumi Yoshinaga

PARENTAL EXPLICIT CONTENT ADVISORY

June Yaoi Manga

US $12.95

Don't Say Any More, Darling



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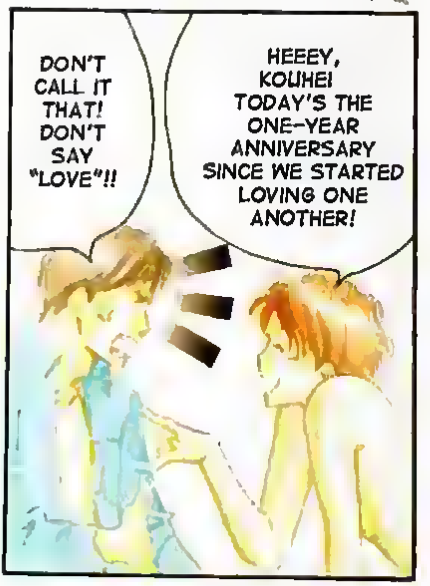
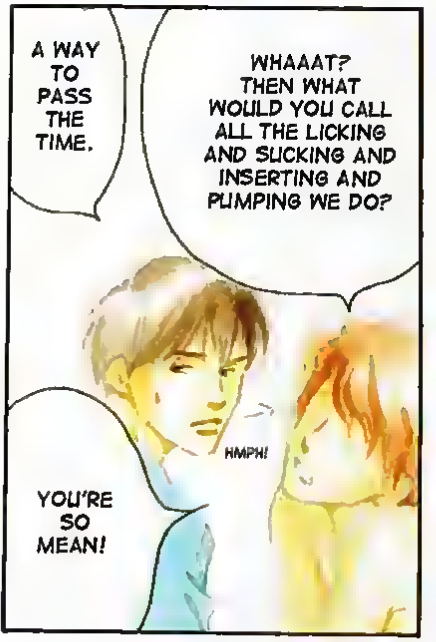
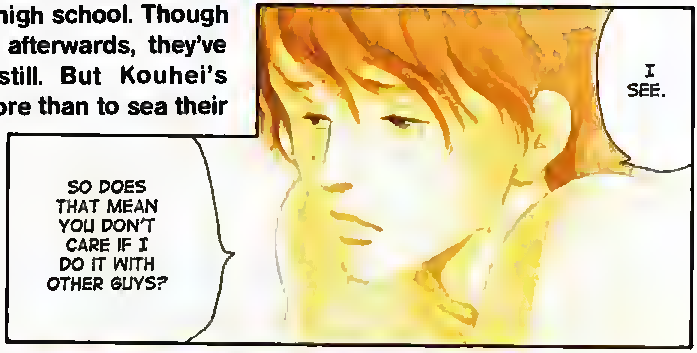

DON'T CALL IT THAT! DON'T SAY "LOVE"!!
HEEEY, KOUHEI TODAY'S THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY SINCE WE STARTED LOVING ONE ANOTHER!


A WAY TO PASS THE TIME.
WHAAAT? THEN WHAT WOULD YOU CALL ALL THE LICKING AND SUCKING AND INSERTING AND PUMPING WE DO?
HMPH!
YOU'RE SO MEAN!

Don't Say Any More, Darling

The only thing kaeping Tadashi, a struggling song lyricist, alive is food handouts from Kouhei, a successful doctor. In fact, Tadashi has been leaching off of Kouhai for practically their entire professional lives.

Before they arrived at this queer living arrangemant, they once anjoyed a little fling back whan they were in high school. Though the affair endad briefly afterwards, they've ramained fast friends still. But Kouhei's parents want nothing more than to sea their son settling down. As Kouhei is pushed ever more forcefully into an arranged marriaga, will ha finally admit that ha saes Tadashi as somathing mora than just a friend?



This book, yet another masterpiece from Fumi Yoshinaga, is a collection of storias that are deceptively simple but which ravaal an unaxpected, sometimes shocking twist at the end. To say any more would be spoiling the fun – grab a copy and see for yourself.

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LOOK - FOOD! CHOW! CAN YOU SEE IT?! YOU HACK LYRICIST!!!
OHHH - KOUHEI ...
...ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION AGAIN, TADASHI?!
FEED ME. ♡
...LIVING ON A SUBPAR DIET AS USUAL, HUH?
WHAT?
HEY, KOUHEI ...
HURRAY... A HAM-BURGER OVER 200 YEN...IT'S A FEAST...
HERE! A SCALLION-MISO BURGER AND ONION RINGS, FROM FRESHNESS BURGER.

HM?

DON'T WORRY - I'VE KNOWN YOU SINCE HIGH SCHOOL. YOU CAN COUNT ON ME TO BRING YOU FOOD WHENEVER YOU WANT.

TADASHI...

HE'S HOPELESS... AS A LYRICIST, HE'S COMPLETELY TALENTLESS...

THUMP!

...

CLICK

FORGET IT. THINK OF THE POOR COMPOSER ...AND THE ARTIST WHO HAS TO SING IT.

MMMM, THESE YELLOW BUNS WITH PUMPKIN IN THEM ARE SOOO CUTE. MAYBE I'LL WRITE A SONG CALLED "PUMPKIN BUNS."

FINE! I'LL GIVE YOU THE REST OF THIS PACK! SO PLEASE DON'T WRITE ANYTHING MORE!

LUCKY - I HAVEN'T HAD A SMOKE IN DAYS...CIGARETTE... CIGARETTE, LALALA WHY IS IT EVERYONE WHILE SMOKING LOOKS A LITTLE BIT STUPID DUBBA DUBBA DAH -♬

OOH, A SMOKE

I FORGOT TO BRING THE MATCHES!

YOU DESERVED IT! I TAKE THE TIME TO COME BY, EVEN THOUGH I'M TIRED FROM AN ALL-NIGHTER AT WORK, AND I HAVE TO PUT UP WITH YOUR STUPID JOKES - YOU HOMO!

OOOH... YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO JAM IT IN MY MOUTH, ***WRAPPING AND ALL !!!***

BLECH

GRIND

GRIND

GRIND

WHAT, YOU MEAN THIS? "YOUR MESSAGE WAS SO TOUCHING, I'M HUNGRY, MEOW, WHAT WILL I DO FOR DINNER TODAY, MEOW? A BIT OF FAKE FATTY TUNA..."

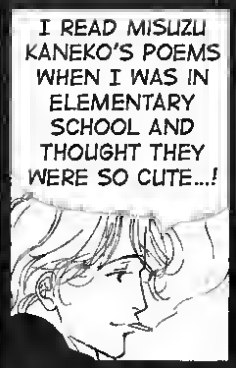
SO? WHO CARES? YOU UNSUCCESSFUL-POVERTY-STRICKEN-HACK-OF-A-HOMO-LYRICIST WHO'S NEVER SENT ME ANY SMS MESSAGES ON MY CELL PHONE OTHER THAN, "I'M HUNGRY!"

HEEEY, THAT'S DISCRIMI-NATORY LANGUAGE DON'T SAY "HOMO," SAY "GAY."

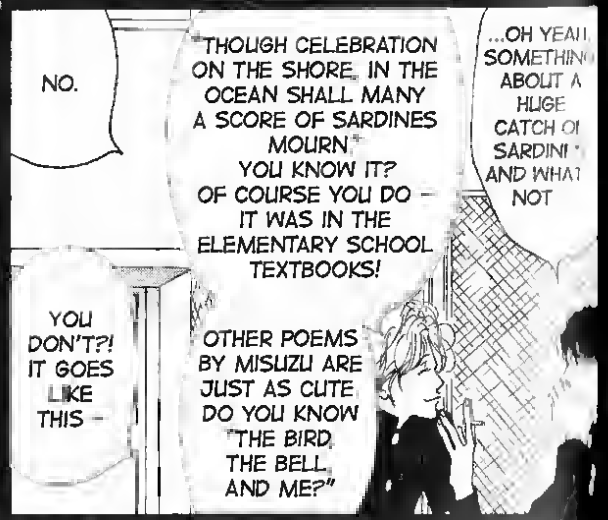
...I AM WORKING. JUST A FEW MOMENTS AGO AS I WAS SENDING YOU A MESSAGE, I THOUGHT UP SOME TOTALLY GREAT LYRICS.

SO KIND -...

"THOUGH I SPREAD MY ARMS, I CANNOT FLY, YET THE WINGED BIRD WHO CAN IS NO MATCH FOR ME ON LAND."


I READ MISUZU KANEKO'S POEMS WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND THOUGHT THEY WERE SO CUTE...!

YEAH. BUT I DON'T *HAVE* TO BE A POET - I JUST WANT A JOB THAT WILL ALLOW ME TO WORK WITH WORDS SOMEHOW.
...POEMS? OH, SO YOU'RE INTO POETRY


NO.
"THOUGH CELEBRATION ON THE SHORE, IN THE OCEAN SHALL MANY A SCORE OF SARDINES MOURN." YOU KNOW IT? OF COURSE YOU DO - IT WAS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS!
...OH YEAH, SOMETHING ABOUT A HUGE CATCH OF SARDINES AND WHAT NOT
YOU DON'T?! IT GOES LIKE THIS -
OTHER POEMS BY MISUZU ARE JUST AS CUTE DO YOU KNOW "THE BIRD, THE BELL, AND ME?"

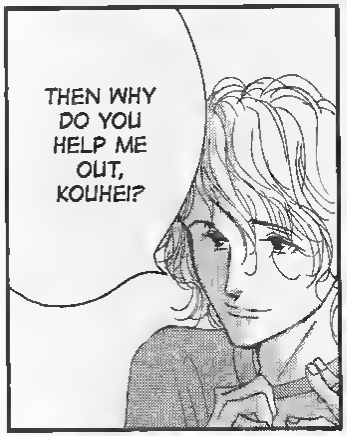
I'LL KEEP IT A SECRET, SO DO ANY OF YOU HAVE A LIGHTER YOU CAN LEND ME?
OH DEAR... CLASS WILL BE OVER BY THE TIME IT TAKES FOR ME TO GET THEM FROM THE CHEMISTRY PREP LAB NOW

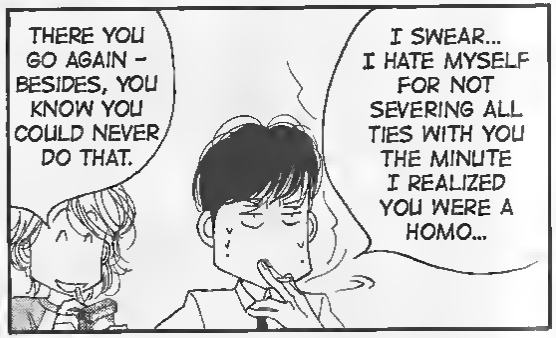
HUH?
IT'S ALRIGHT - I'LL LEND MINE, FUKAMI.

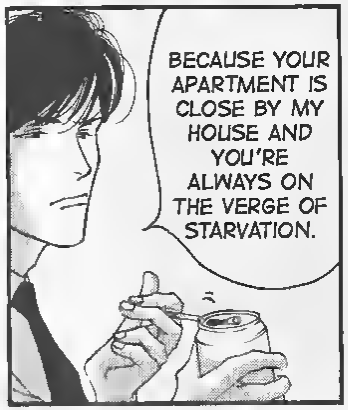
...

THANK YOU, WATASE-KUN.
HERE, TEACHER.
YOURS ONLY HAS A BIT OF FUEL LEFT I JUST BOUGHT MINE

HUH?!
OUR LOVE IS MUTUAL...


THEN WHY DO YOU HELP ME OUT, KOUHEI?


THERE YOU GO AGAIN - BESIDES, YOU KNOW YOU COULD NEVER DO THAT.
I SWEAR... I HATE MYSELF FOR NOT SEVERING ALL TIES WITH YOU THE MINUTE I REALIZED YOU WERE A HOMO...


BECAUSE YOUR APARTMENT IS CLOSE BY MY HOUSE AND YOU'RE ALWAYS ON THE VERGE OF STARVATION.

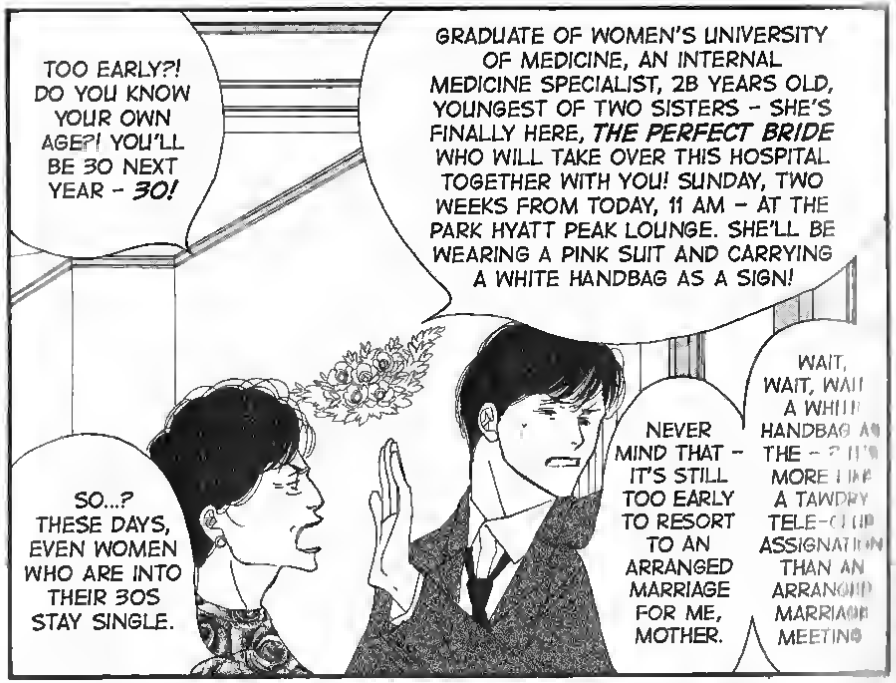
HO HO - SO YOU DARE?! JUST HOW MANY WOMEN DO YOU THINK I'VE GONE OUT WITH UNTIL NOW? STOP CLASSIFYING ME AS A HOMO, TOO - YOU HOMO!
AT THAT TIME, YOU LIKED ME A LITTLE BIT - REMEMBER, KOUHEI?

ALL ARE DIFFERENT, YET EACH IS GOOD."
"THOUGH I ROCK MY BODY, IT CANNOT PRODUCE A DULCET TONE, YET THE BELL THAT CAN DOES NOT KNOW AS MANY SONGS AS I.
THE BIRD, THE BELL, AND ME -

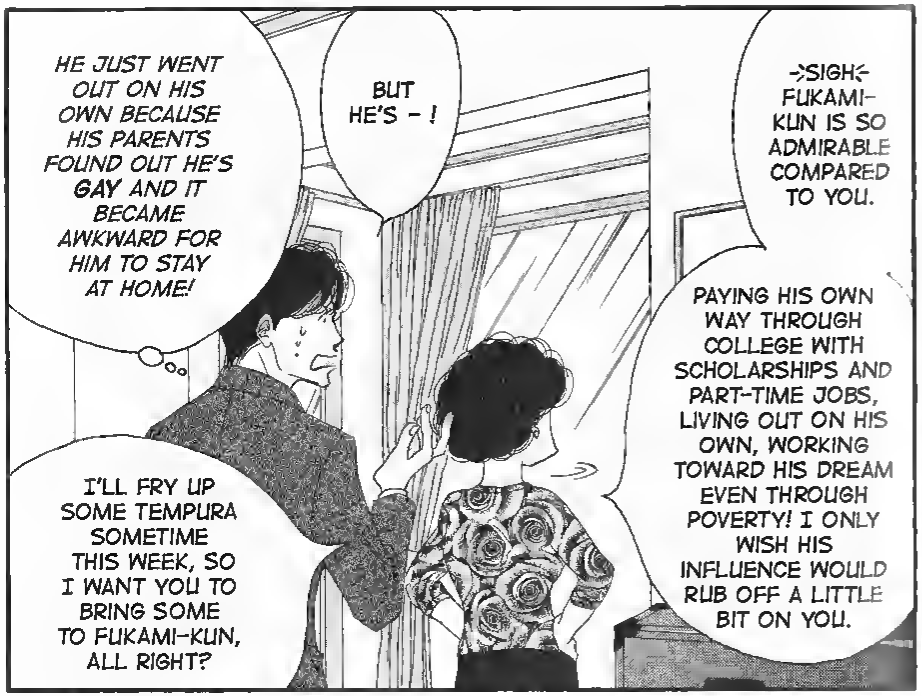
YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S CUTE.
OOH - MISUZU'S STUFF REALLY IS CUTE!

KOUHEI ...

?
!


OH, BUT KOUHEI... IF I HAD BEEN BORN A WOMAN, YOU'D HAVE MARRIED ME, RIGHT...?
NO WAY. WHO'D MARRY AN UNEMPLOYED, HAIR-DYED, BUBBLE-HEADED WOMAN WHO LIVES IN A FILTHY DUMP AND CAN'T COOK FOR HERSELF? YOU IDIOT.
WELCOME BACK, KOUHEI. COME HERE A MINUTE.
I'M HOME.
渡瀬内科医院
WATASE HOSPITAL OF INTERNAL MEDICINE
OPEN WEEKDAYS 9AM 12-2 5PM
PERSONAL PROFILE
EDUCATION
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
HOBBY
WATCHING MOVIES AND VIDEOS

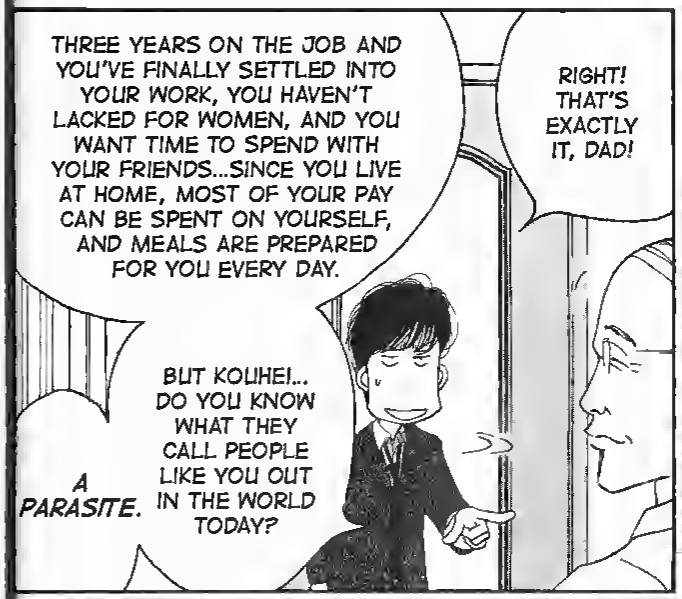
TOO EARLY?! DO YOU KNOW YOUR OWN AGE?! YOU'LL BE 30 NEXT YEAR - 30!
GRADUATE OF WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, AN INTERNAL MEDICINE SPECIALIST, 28 YEARS OLD, YOUNGEST OF TWO SISTERS - SHE'S FINALLY HERE, THE PERFECT BRIDE WHO WILL TAKE OVER THIS HOSPITAL TOGETHER WITH YOU! SUNDAY, TWO WEEKS FROM TODAY, 11 AM - AT THE PARK HYATT PEAK LOUNGE. SHE'LL BE WEARING A PINK SUIT AND CARRYING A WHITE HANDBAG AS A SIGN!
SO...? THESE DAYS, EVEN WOMEN WHO ARE INTO THEIR 30S STAY SINGLE.
NEVER MIND THAT - IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO RESORT TO AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE FOR ME, MOTHER.
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT A WHITE HANDBAG AS THE - ? IT'S MORE LIKE A TAWDRY TELE-CLUB ASSIGNATION THAN AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE MEETING
OH, I SEE - SO THERE'S ONE YOU'RE WILLING TO MARRY OUT OF THE WOMEN YOU'VE CASUALLY PICKED UP IN SOME CASUAL LOCATION AND ARE CASUALLY SEEING? I SEE!
BESIDES, I'M NOT SO DESPERATE THAT I HAVE TO BOOK A MEETING TO GET WOMEN
ALL THAT'S WAITING FOR MEN PAST 30 IS A GUT, AND IF YOU TAKE AFTER FATHER, A BALD HEAD AS WELL. YOU CAN RUSH TO PUT YOURSELF UP ON THE MARRIAGE BLOCK THEN, BUT BY THAT TIME YOUR MARKET VALUE WILL ALREADY HAVE PLUMMETED!
MOTHER
YOU MAY BE A LITTLE BIT TALLISH AND SMART AND A DOCTOR AT A UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, BUT THE WOMEN WILL ONLY FLOCK TO YOU WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG!

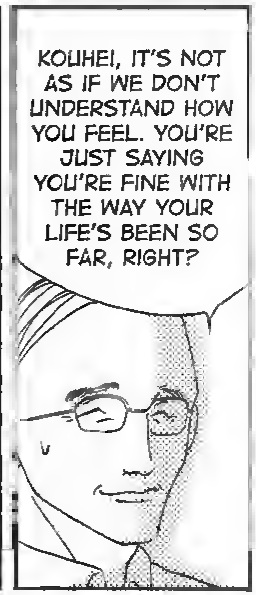

HE JUST WENT OUT ON HIS OWN BECAUSE HIS PARENTS FOUND OUT HE'S GAY AND IT BECAME AWKWARD FOR HIM TO STAY AT HOME!
BUT HE'S - !
->SIGH<- FUKAMI-KUN IS SO ADMIRABLE COMPARED TO YOU.
PAYING HIS OWN WAY THROUGH COLLEGE WITH SCHOLARSHIPS AND PART-TIME JOBS, LIVING OUT ON HIS OWN, WORKING TOWARD HIS DREAM EVEN THROUGH POVERTY! I ONLY WISH HIS INFLUENCE WOULD RUB OFF A LITTLE BIT ON YOU.
I'LL FRY UP SOME TEMPURA SOMETIME THIS WEEK, SO I WANT YOU TO BRING SOME TO FUKAMI-KUN, ALL RIGHT?

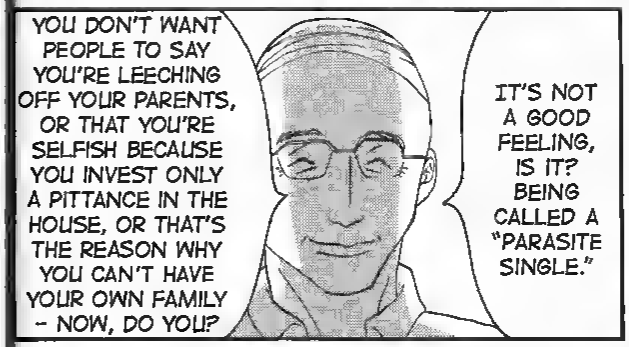
THEN BRING HIM SOME TEMPURA SAUCE! AND GRATED RADISH AND RICE AS WELL! AND WEAR A NAVY SUIT TO THE MEETING!
WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT TADASHI? HE'S JUST A HO-... I MEAN, AN AIRHEADED, JOBLESS HACK! HE'S ONLY ALIVE BECAUSE I GO HELP HIM OUT ONCE IN AWHILE...BESIDES, HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE ANY TEMPURA SAUCE AT HIS PLACE!

MMM - GOOD...

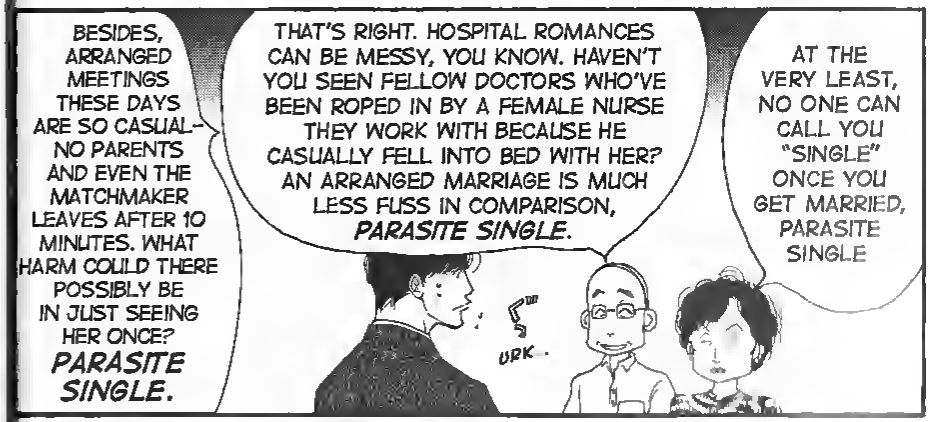
OH... DR. WATASE IS LOOKING EVEN MORE SULLEN THAN USUAL - LOVELY...
UGH... AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE? HAVE THOSE TWO SUDDENLY STARTED WORRYING ABOUT THEIR RETIREMENT OR SOMETHING?

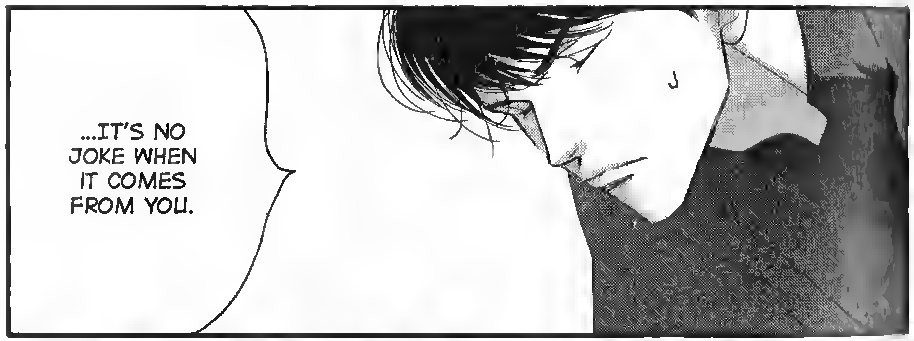

THREE YEARS ON THE JOB AND YOU'VE FINALLY SETTLED INTO YOUR WORK, YOU HAVEN'T LACKED FOR WOMEN, AND YOU WANT TIME TO SPEND WITH YOUR FRIENDS...SINCE YOU LIVE AT HOME, MOST OF YOUR PAY CAN BE SPENT ON YOURSELF, AND MEALS ARE PREPARED FOR YOU EVERY DAY.
RIGHT! THAT'S EXACTLY IT, DAD!
BUT KOUHEI... DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY CALL PEOPLE LIKE YOU OUT IN THE WORLD TODAY?
A PARASITE.

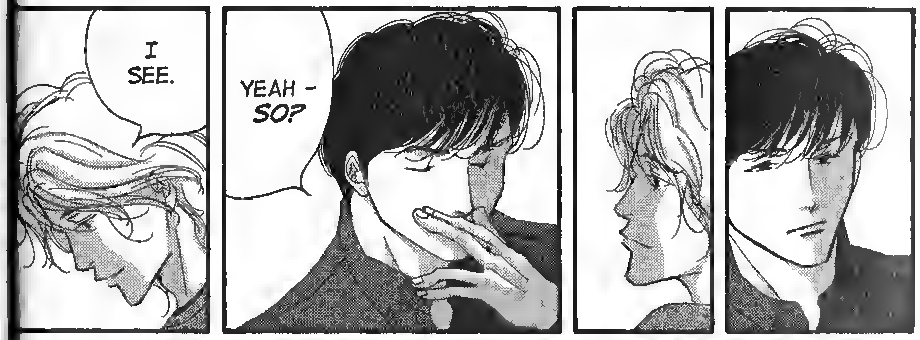

KOUHEI, IT'S NOT AS IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL. YOU'RE JUST SAYING YOU'RE FINE WITH THE WAY YOUR LIFE'S BEEN SO FAR, RIGHT?


YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO SAY YOU'RE LEECHING OFF YOUR PARENTS, OR THAT YOU'RE SELFISH BECAUSE YOU INVEST ONLY A PITTANCE IN THE HOUSE, OR THAT'S THE REASON WHY YOU CAN'T HAVE YOUR OWN FAMILY - NOW, DO YOU?
IT'S NOT A GOOD FEELING, IS IT? BEING CALLED A "PARASITE SINGLE."

URK...


BESIDES, ARRANGED MEETINGS THESE DAYS ARE SO CASUAL- NO PARENTS AND EVEN THE MATCHMAKER LEAVES AFTER 10 MINUTES. WHAT HARM COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE IN JUST SEEING HER ONCE? PARASITE SINGLE.
THAT'S RIGHT. HOSPITAL ROMANCES CAN BE MESSY, YOU KNOW. HAVEN'T YOU SEEN FELLOW DOCTORS WHO'VE BEEN ROPED IN BY A FEMALE NURSE THEY WORK WITH BECAUSE HE CASUALLY FELL INTO BED WITH HER? AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE IS MUCH LESS FUSS IN COMPARISON, PARASITE SINGLE.
URK..
AT THE VERY LEAST, NO ONE CAN CALL YOU "SINGLE" ONCE YOU GET MARRIED, PARASITE SINGLE


SO?
NO SONGS ABOUT AN EGGPLANT!
DON'T YOU THINK THE PURPLE AN EGGPLANT TEMPURA TURNS AFTER SOME TIME HAS PASSED SINCE IT WAS FIRST FRIED UP IS REALLY BEAUTIFUL?
HEY -
HUH?
YOU'RE GOING TO THIS ARRANGED MARRIAGE MEETING?
OH, YOU SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME.
I SWEAR ...


I SEE.
YEAH - SO?

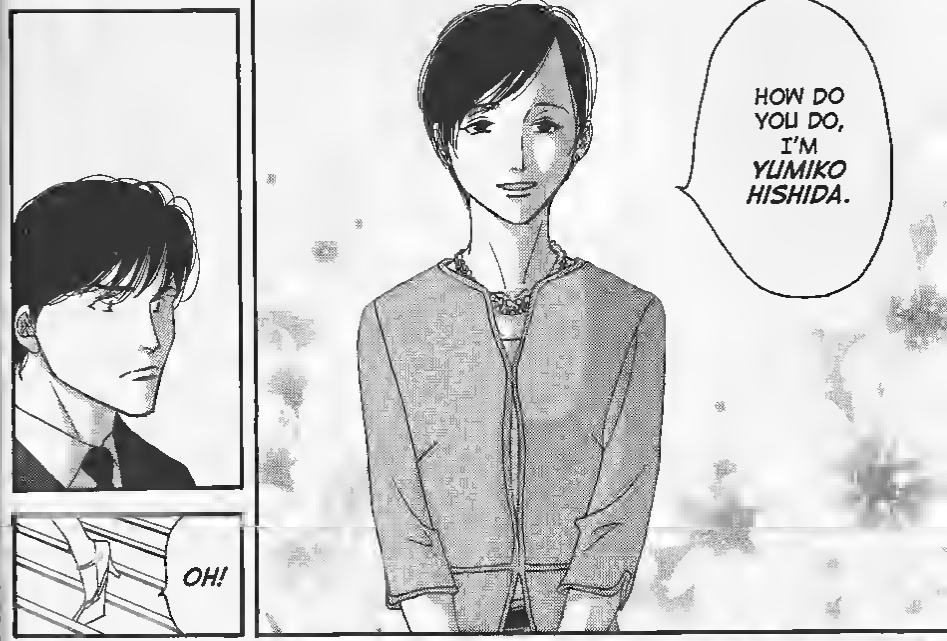
MM? YEAH, MAYBE...
HM?
HEY, TADASHI.
IF I GOT MARRIED AND STOPPED COMING HERE, WOULD YOU SERIOUSLY DIE OF STARVATION?

...IT'S NO JOKE WHEN IT COMES FROM YOU.

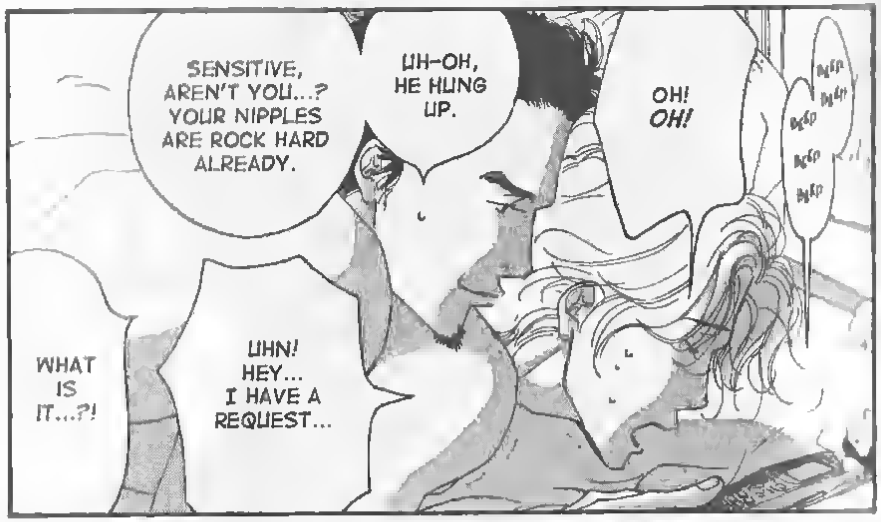
...
OKAY.
THANKS, KOUHEI.

EVEN AFTER I GET MARRIED, I'LL CONTINUE TO BRING YOU MY WIFE'S HOMEMADE MEALS FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE! SO DON'T WORRY, OK?
FINE! I'LL MAKE THIS PROMISE, TADASHI!

NOT LIKELY! I'M SURE SHE'LL BE UGLIER THAN IN HER PICTURE, AND ONE OF THOSE SNOBBY, BORING WOMEN TYPICAL IN THE SCIENCE FIELD.
I HOPE SHE'S A NICE LADY


HOW DO YOU DO, I'M YUMIKO HISHIDA.
OH!
A...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
OOOGH... P-PARDON ME... I'M JUST SO CLUMSY -
Y...YES... I'M FINE... IT'S JUST THAT I'M NOT USED TO BEING DRESSED SO FORMALLY!
TUKE
SCATTER
SLAM!

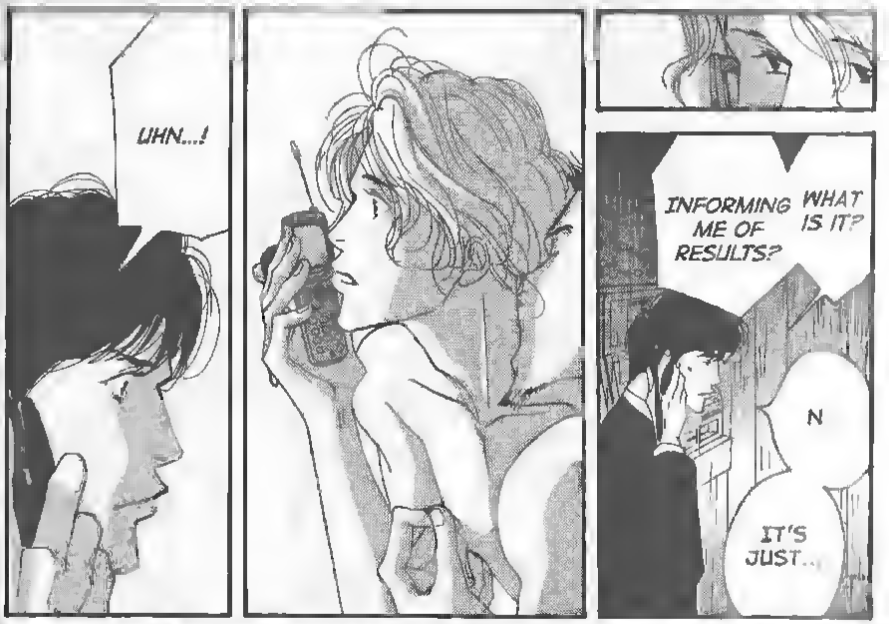
OH! COULD IT BE I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO MENTION THINGS LIKE THAT?!
WHAT'S WITH THIS WOMAN? SHE'S TOTALLY ENTER-TAINING...
NO, PLEASE! THEY'RE THINGS LIKE AN EXTRA PAIR OF PANTYHOSE AND TAMPONS...!
CAN YOU STAND? I'LL PICK YOUR THINGS UP FOR YOU.
BUT I ADMIRE SOMEONE WITH A JOB LIKE THAT. I'VE LIKED POETRY SINCE I WAS YOUNG, TOO.
OH MY GOD, THAT'S SO FUNNY.
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH MISUZU KANEKO? HER POEMS ARE SO CUTE.
THERE'S MORE - THE CLINCHER IS...
TH... THAT'S SO FUNNY! YOUR FRIEND'S LYRICS ARE TOO FUNNY!
HA HA HA HA!
S-STOP! MY STOMACH HURTS!
TADAH- TA- TA- TA- TADAH- TA-TA- ♫
SHAAA


SENSITIVE, AREN'T YOU...? YOUR NIPPLES ARE ROCK HARD ALREADY.
UH-OH, HE HUNG UP.
OH! OH!
WHAT IS IT...?!
UHN! HEY... I HAVE A REQUEST...

I'M COMING ...!
I WANT YOU TO LEAVE AND NEVER COME BACK... OKAY? OH... THAT'S GOOD...
AFTER YOU'VE EJACU-LATED...

SPLASH
...GUESS I'LL HAVE TO RUN HOME THROUGH THIS RAIN.
WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?!
IF YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF DOING IT, DON'T BOTHER ANSWERING THE PHONE!
SHAAA

TADA-SHI.
HELLO? KOUHEI?
P!
WHERE ARE YOU? AT HOME?
WHAT?
CALL... WATASE KOUHEI 09012345678
TADAAH
WHO COULD IT BE?
OH, THAT'S HOKOMO'S SONG. I LIKE HER, TOO.


UHN...!
INFORMING ME OF RESULTS?
WHAT IS IT?
N
IT'S JUST...

P!
OH...!
IT'S JUST AN OLD FLAME, RIGHT? THEN LET HIM HEAR US...
HEY - STOP IT!
S.

...?
INSAIL
ONI
OMELET
BURGER
ONION
RINGS,
AND A
GREEN
SALAD
WHAT?!
SHINSAIDO
"I'M HUNGRY, MEOW," A BIT OF FAKE FATTY TUNA HOO... YEAH...
YOUR MESSAGE - WAS SO TOUCHING - ♫
OH YEAH, IT'S GOOD. THE LYRICS ARE SUPER CUTE.
OH - I'VE GOT SOME MONEY. JUST A SEC, I HAVE TO BUY THE NEW HOKOMO.
"PUMPKIN BUNS" HOKOMO SHIBIRA
HITCHIN'?

...
...
1 CREATE NEW MESSAGE
2 MESSAGES RECEIVED (10)
3 MESSAGES SENT (8)
I'M HUNGRY MEOW ♥
I'M HUNGRY MEOW ♥
I'M HUNGRY MEOW ♥

YOU CAME.
YOUR BANK BOOK! LET ME SEE IT – NOW! YOU BASTARD!
HUH?
YOUR BANK BOOK.
OH.
WHSH!

WHAT DID THEY SAY?!
TOTALLY! ESPECIALLY THE "...YOUR MESSAGE 'I'M HUNGRY, MEOW'" PART!
DOESN'T IT TOTALLY MAKE YOU CRY?!
...HE REALLY ISN'T COMING ANYMORE?
MAYBE... ... ...
SLAM!
SHAAA

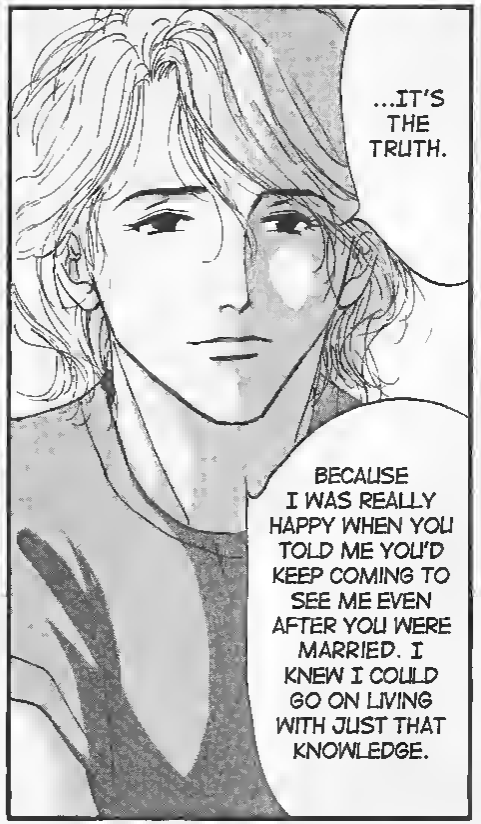
HA HA
I'M AN IDIOT I WAS THE ONLY ONE ARROGANTLY THINKING YOU COULDN'T GO ON LIVING WITHOUT ME..
I *REALLY* WOULD DIE WITHOUT YOU.
THEN WHAT IS THE TRUTH?
KOUHEI, THAT'S NOT TRUE

YOU TRICKED ME.
SO YOU'VE BEEN AN ULTRA-SUCCESSFUL HOMO LYRICIST THIS WHOLE TIME.
UMM...
HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF YEN AND YOU'VE ONLY GOT IT IN A REGULAR SAVINGS ACCOUNT... MAKE A LITTLE MORE EFFICIENT USE OF YOUR MONEY! I MEAN, WHAT IS THIS HUGE AMOUNT YOU'VE GOT STASHED AWAY?
HA!
I JUST THOUGHT IF I TOLD YOU, YOU WOULDN'T COME TO MY APARTMENT ANYMORE, KOUHEI..
OF COURSE I WOULDN'T! THERE MUST BE A MILLION MEN WANTING TO SLEEP WITH A RICH MAN LIKE YOU, AREN'T THERE?!

THE REST OF THE "I'M HUNGRY, MEOW" LYRICS GO LIKE THIS - "WHEN I THOUGHT OF THOSE LONG, SMART FINGERS TAPPING OUT THIS MESSAGE I LAUGHED, BUT NOW I JUST FEEL LONGING - TOUCH ME ONCE AGAIN WITH THOSE FINGERS, THOSE HANDS."
IT'S ABOUT YOUR FINGERS, KOUHEI.

!!!

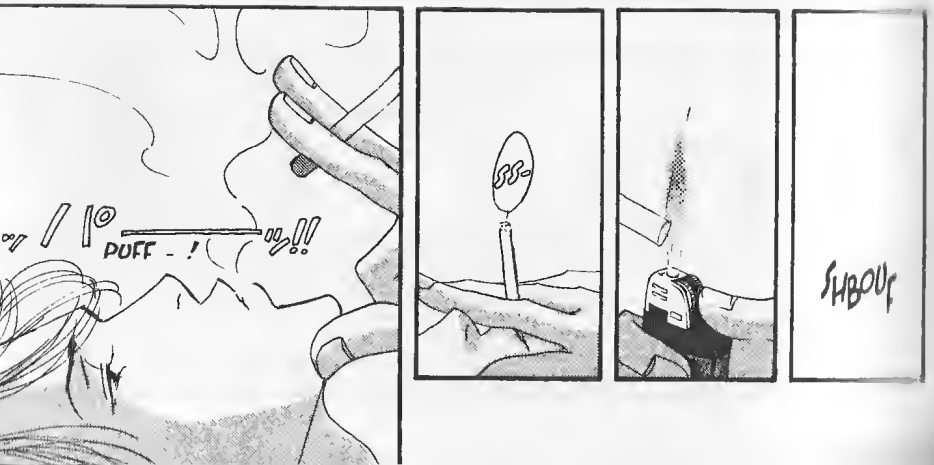
GIVE ME A BREAK, TADASHI-I...!
TADASHI...!
KOUHEI, LISTEN.
KOUHEI.

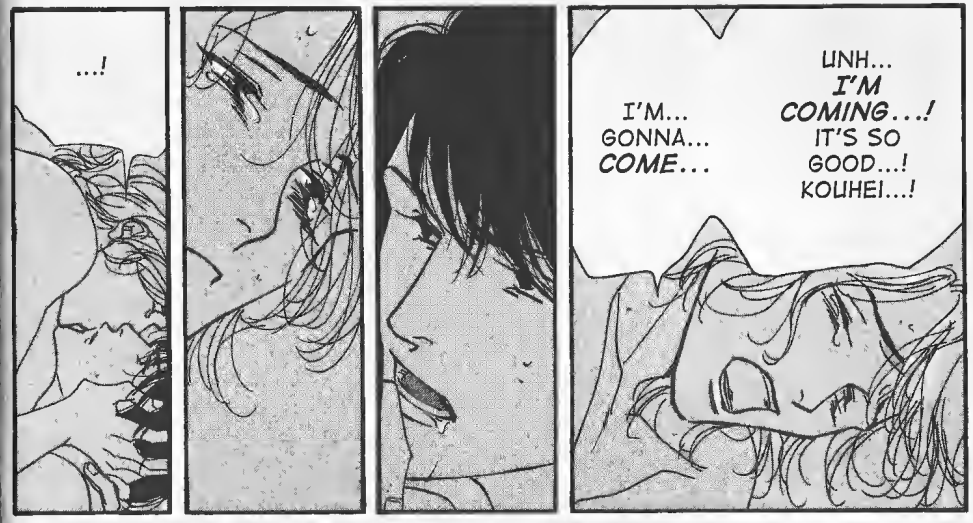

...IT'S THE TRUTH.
BECAUSE I WAS REALLY HAPPY WHEN YOU TOLD ME YOU'D KEEP COMING TO SEE ME EVEN AFTER YOU WERE MARRIED. I KNEW I COULD GO ON LIVING WITH JUST THAT KNOWLEDGE.

THAT HURTS ... KOUHEI ...!
OH! OH OH OH OUCH ...!
CHMO
KOUHEI – KOUHEI NOT SO HARD...!
OH!
JRP JRP JRP
DON'T...!
U... UHH...!
SHAVER SHAVER SHAVER

DAMMIT...!

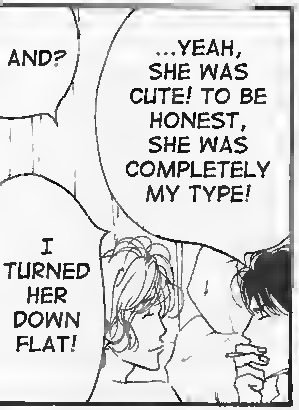
AHN...!

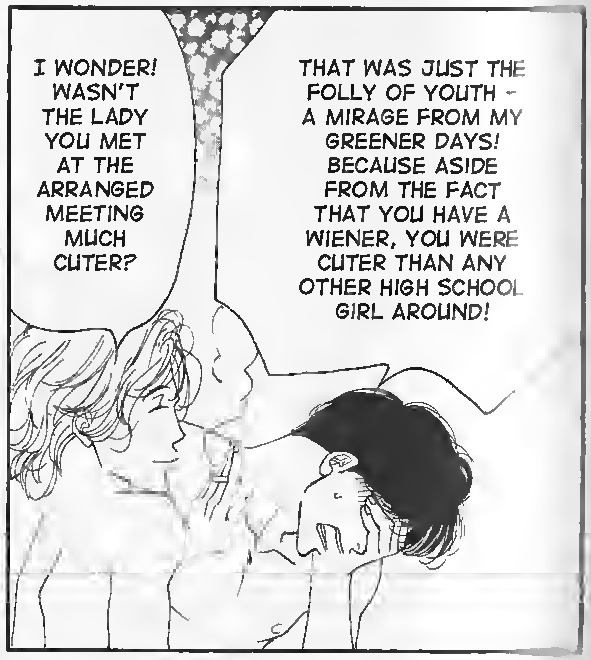

PUFF - !
SSS-
SHOUT

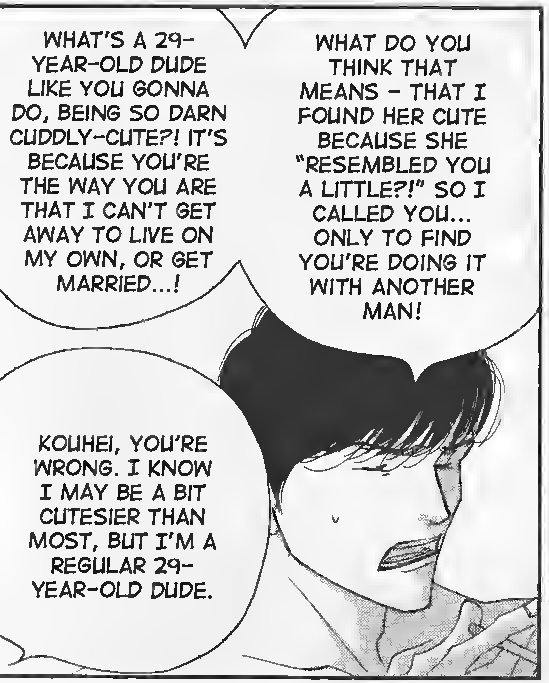

...!
I'M... GONNA... COME...
UNH... I'M COMING...! IT'S SO GOOD...! KOUHEI...!

PLEASE -
I LOVE YOU...
I LOVE YOU...
...
YOU FOOL...
I LOVE YOU...

THIS IS WHY YOU'RE SO CUTE...!

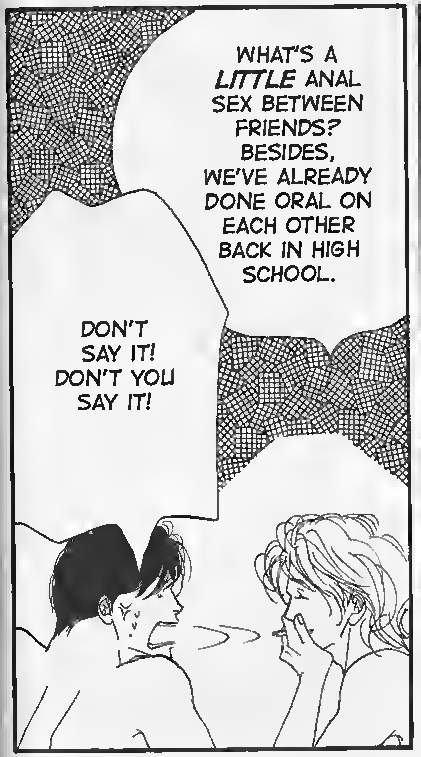

AND?
...YEAH, SHE WAS CUTE! TO BE HONEST, SHE WAS COMPLETELY MY TYPE!
I TURNED HER DOWN FLAT!


I WONDER! WASN'T THE LADY YOU MET AT THE ARRANGED MEETING MUCH CUTER?
THAT WAS JUST THE FOLLY OF YOUTH - A MIRAGE FROM MY GREENER DAYS! BECAUSE ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE A WIENER, YOU WERE CUTER THAN ANY OTHER HIGH SCHOOL GIRL AROUND!


WHAT'S A 29-YEAR-OLD DUDE LIKE YOU GONNA DO, BEING SO DARN CUDDLY-CUTE?! IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE THE WAY YOU ARE THAT I CAN'T GET AWAY TO LIVE ON MY OWN, OR GET MARRIED...!
WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT MEANS - THAT I FOUND HER CUTE BECAUSE SHE "RESEMBLED YOU A LITTLE?!" SO I CALLED YOU... ONLY TO FIND YOU'RE DOING IT WITH ANOTHER MAN!
KOUHEI, YOU'RE WRONG. I KNOW I MAY BE A BIT CUTESIER THAN MOST, BUT I'M A REGULAR 29-YEAR-OLD DUDE.

...SHE RESEM-BLED YOU A LITTLE.

...
...
...
PUF
PUF
PUF


WHAT'S A LITTLE ANAL SEX BETWEEN FRIENDS? BESIDES, WE'VE ALREADY DONE ORAL ON EACH OTHER BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL.
DON'T SAY IT! DON'T YOU SAY IT!

NOW, NOW, NOW, NOW -
WHAT HAVE I DONE...

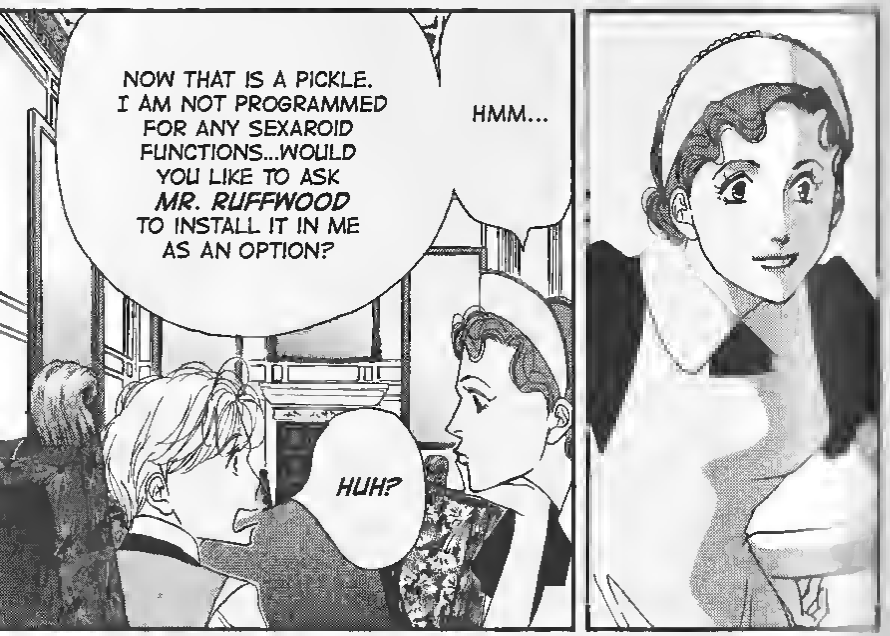
Don't say
Any more,
Darling

SO IF YOU REALLY THINK I'M SUCH A CUTIE KOUHEI, THAT MUST MEAN YOU LOV-...
DON'T SAY IT! DON'T SAY ANY MORE!

WHEN I BECAME CONSCIOUS, I FOUND MYSELF ALL ALONE IN THIS MANSION.

HEY - MS. HAMILTON
WHAT'S THE EXACT NAME OF MY ILLNESS AGAIN?

MUTATIVE HUDSON A-II TYPE IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME, SIR ARTHUR.

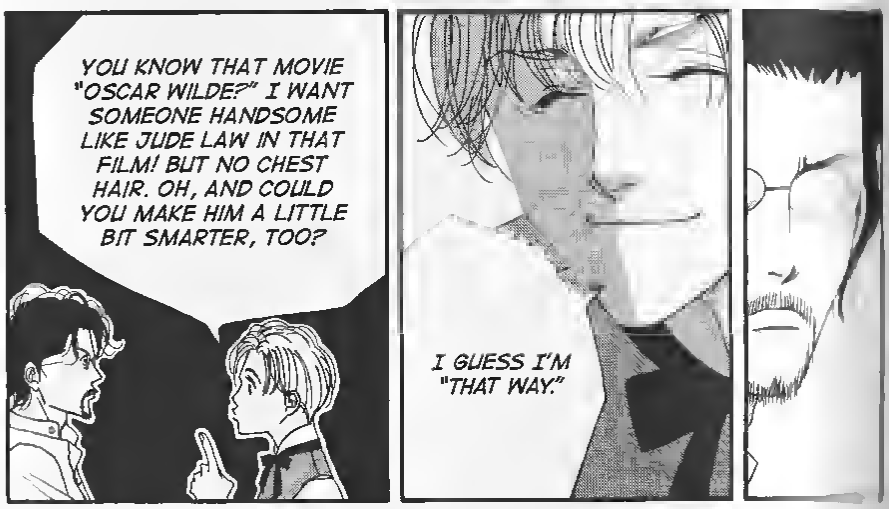

NOW THAT IS A PICKLE. I AM NOT PROGRAMMED FOR ANY SEXAROID FUNCTIONS...WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK MR. RUFFWOOD TO INSTALL IT IN ME AS AN OPTION?
HMM...
HUH?

THAT IS SWEET OF YOU TO SAY.
I LIKE YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE, MS. HAMILTON! YOU'RE MY MOMMY!
NOOO!
CONTACT MY BROTHER FOR ME, MS. HAMILTON!

NOW, NOW - WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS? HERE YOU ARE -
I CAN NEVER REMEMBER, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I HEAR IT.
HMM -
THANKS...
IT'S GINGER MILK TEA, WITH PLENTY OF HONEY.

BUT YOU HAVE THINGS TO DO. THIS MORNING YOU HAVE GEOMETRY AND GEOGRAPHY TO STUDY.
ARRRRGH!
I WANNA HAVE SEX!
I HATE STUDYING!
I'M SOOOO BORED - !
SLURP

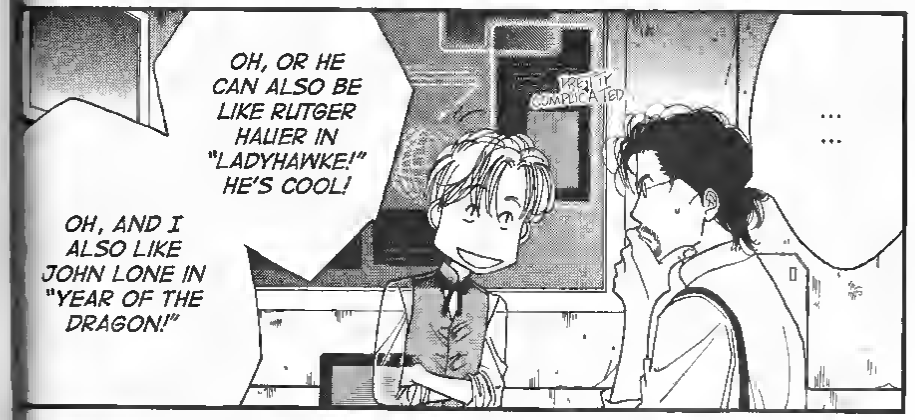
I UNDERSTAND, SO PLEASE STOP POPPING OUT AT ME IN 3D! IT'S FOR MY POOR, THOUGH DECIDEDLY UN-CUTE, AILING LITTLE BROTHER - I'LL DO AS YOU SAY!
I UNDER-STAND!
COME ON, THINK ABOUT IT - I'M 15. WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT ALL THE TIME WHEN YOU WERE 15, BROTHER? WASN'T 99% OF YOUR MIND FILLED WITH THE THOUGHT OF SEX? WEREN'T YOU WILLING TO DIE SATISFIED IF YOU COULD STICK IT IN A WOMAN DOWN THERE?
AND I WANT IT TO BE MALE - OKAY?

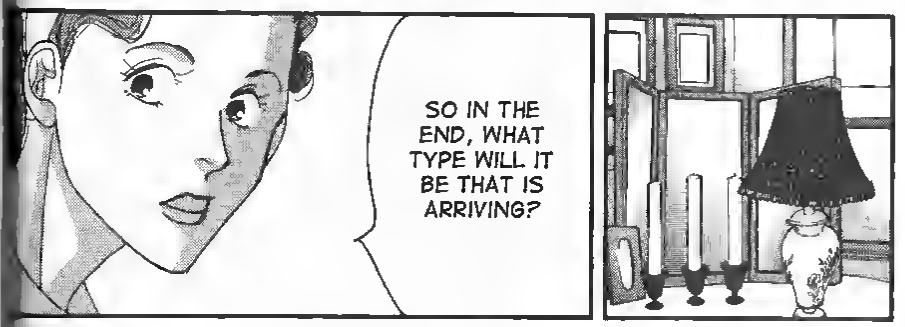

YOU KNOW THAT MOVIE "OSCAR WILDE?" I WANT SOMEONE HANDSOME LIKE JUDE LAW IN THAT FILM! BUT NO CHEST HAIR. OH, AND COULD YOU MAKE HIM A LITTLE BIT SMARTER, TOO?
I GUESS I'M "THAT WAY."

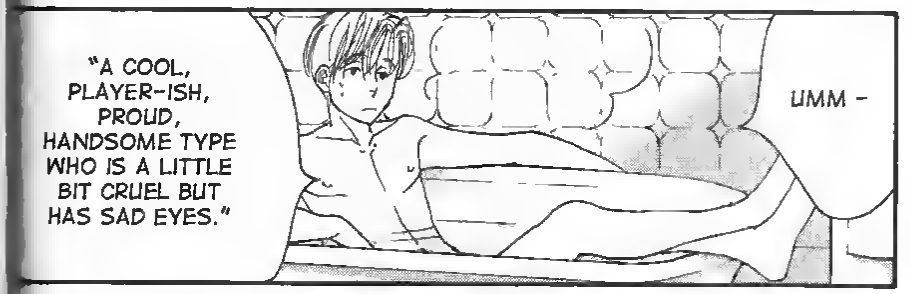
SO, BROTHER, MAKE ME ONE SUPER HIGH-PERFORMANCE SEXAROID, STAT!

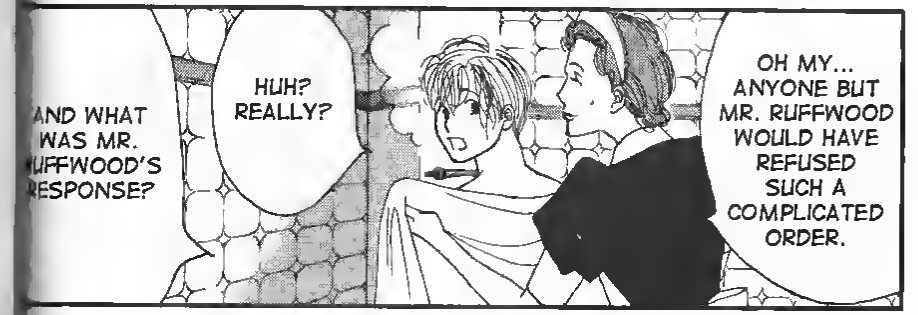
FOR THE FORLORN ELDERLY LIVING ALONE, A CUTE ANDROID, AN EXACT REPLICA OF A LITTLE GRANDCHILD!
FOR THE ABANDONED INFANT, YOU CREATE A LOVING ANDROID, AN EXACT REPLICA OF ITS MOTHER!
YOU CAN'T?! YOU CAN, RIGHT?! BECAUSE YOU'RE A TOP-CLASS DOLL-MAKER!
AND FOR THE POOR YOUNG BOY WITH AN INCURABLE DISEASE WHO CAN'T STEP ONE FOOT OUTSIDE OF HIS MANSION, A SEXAROID!

I KNOW YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THAT.
IT WILL BE FINE. MR. RUFFWOOD IS AN EXCELLENT DOLL-MAKER. HE ALSO LOVES HIS BROTHER VERY MUCH. I AM SURE HE WILL DELIVER A LOVELY SEXAROID, BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE COULD MAKE.
"VERY WELL I'LL GIVE IT A PROGRAM THAT WILL BE SURE TO KEEP YOU FROM BOREDOM."
SO HE SAYS. BUT I WONDER I MEAN, BROTHER DOESN'T EXACTLY SEEM LIKE HE'S GOT A LOT OF ROMANTIC EXPERIENCE
OH WELL - IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE A FLOP, I'LL JUST ASK SOME OTHER DOLL-MAKER! AFTER ALL, BROTHER'S NOT THE ONLY ONE!
..ARE YOU ARTHUR?


OH, OR HE CAN ALSO BE LIKE RUTGER HAUER IN "LADYHAWKE!" HE'S COOL!
OH, AND I ALSO LIKE JOHN LONE IN "YEAR OF THE DRAGON!"
PRETTY COMPLICATED
...
...


SO IN THE END, WHAT TYPE WILL IT BE THAT IS ARRIVING?


"A COOL, PLAYER-ISH, PROUD, HANDSOME TYPE WHO IS A LITTLE BIT CRUEL BUT HAS SAD EYES."
UMM -

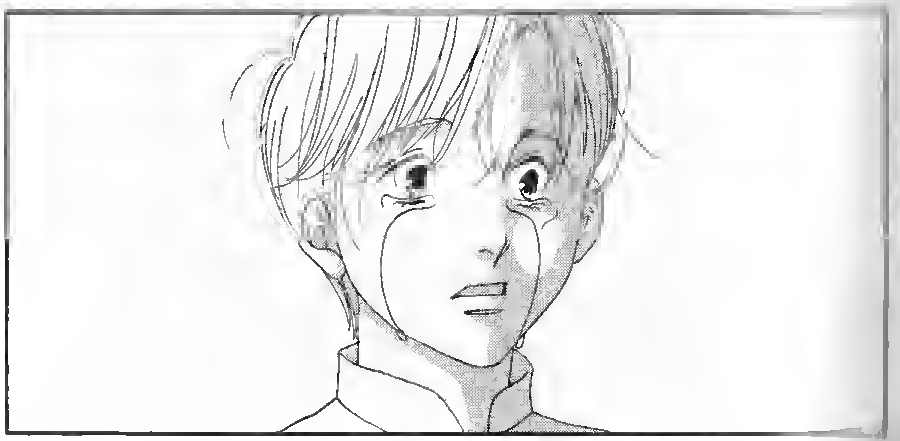

AND WHAT WAS MR. RUFFWOOD'S RESPONSE?
HUH? REALLY?
OH MY... ANYONE BUT MR. RUFFWOOD WOULD HAVE REFUSED SUCH A COMPLICATED ORDER.

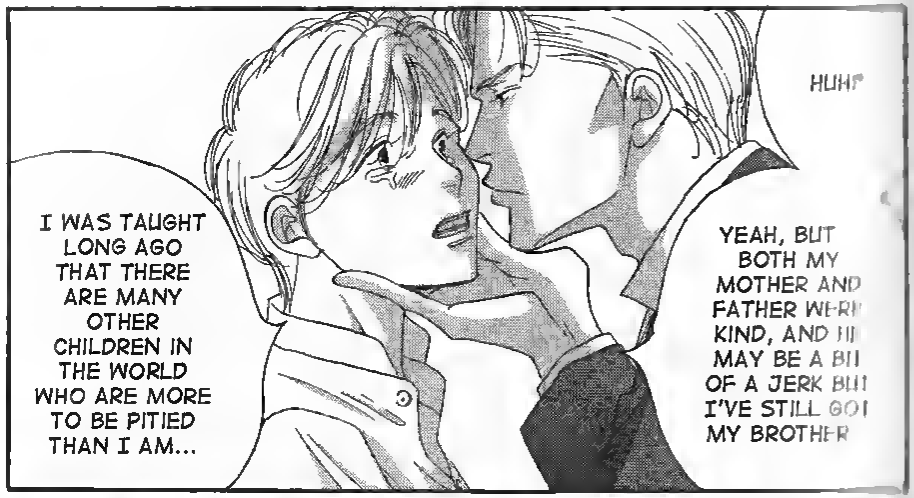
WHY, YOU'RE STILL BUT A CHILD!
DOES HE EXPECT ME TO PARTNER A BRAT STILL SMELLING OF DIRTY DIAPERS SUCH AS YOU?

DAMMIT... BIG BRO SURE HAS CREATED AN ANNOYING SEXAROID! WHAT'S WITH THIS RUDE ATTITUDE?!
WHA ...?!
I AM *WILLIAM TREVOR* – JUST CALL ME TREVOR. I'LL NOT ALLOW YOU TO CALL ME BY MY FIRST NAME.
AH, WELL – THIS IS PART OF MY JOB. IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

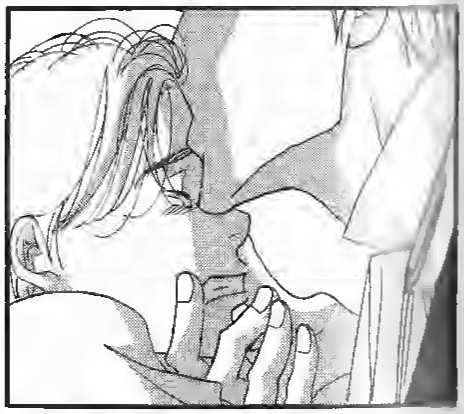
AND *WHY* IS A SEXAROID RETELLING ITS PERSONAL HISTORY?!
MY MOTHER WAS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, OF NOBLE STOCK

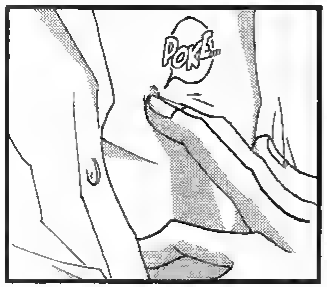
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER.
...HOW GOES IT? IS MY BROTHER ANGRY, MS HAMILTON?

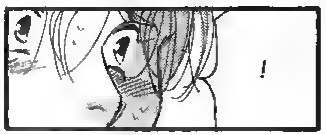



I WAS TAUGHT LONG AGO THAT THERE ARE MANY OTHER CHILDREN IN THE WORLD WHO ARE MORE TO BE PITIED THAN I AM...
HUH?
YEAH, BUT BOTH MY MOTHER AND FATHER WERE KIND, AND HE MAY BE A BIT OF A JERK BUT I'VE STILL GOT MY BROTHER

EEK -
THAT TICKLES...
...!

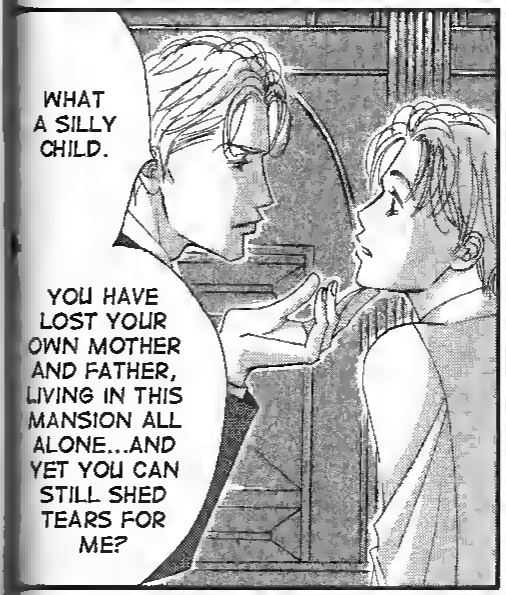



POKE


!

OH
TWINK

YES... AND THAT IS HOW I AM NO LONGER ABLE TO TRUST - NOT JUST WOMEN, BUT ALL PEOPLE...
TREVOR - ! YOU POOR, POOR THING! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOUR MOTHER DID THAT TO YOU - !
ANDROID WITH REMINISCENCE PROGRAMME ENABLED?


WHAT A SILLY CHILD.
YOU HAVE LOST YOUR OWN MOTHER AND FATHER, LIVING IN THIS MANSION ALL ALONE...AND YET YOU CAN STILL SHED TEARS FOR ME?

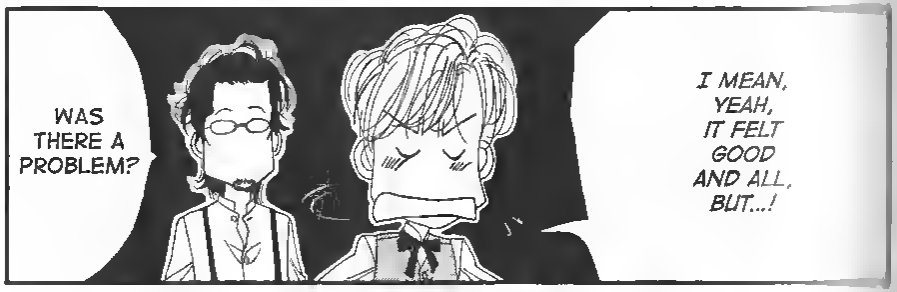
UNF...
UHNN...!
NN...
CREAK
H...UHH...
B... BUT... OH... U... UHHN...!
LISTEN TO THAT. YOUR SHORTS ARE ALREADY SOPPING.
OH...!
OH!
U... WHOA...! UH... OH! OH!
FLINCH!
THUD
JOP JOP
GULP
⇒GASP⇐
⇒HUFF⇐
⇒HUFF HUFF HUFF⇐

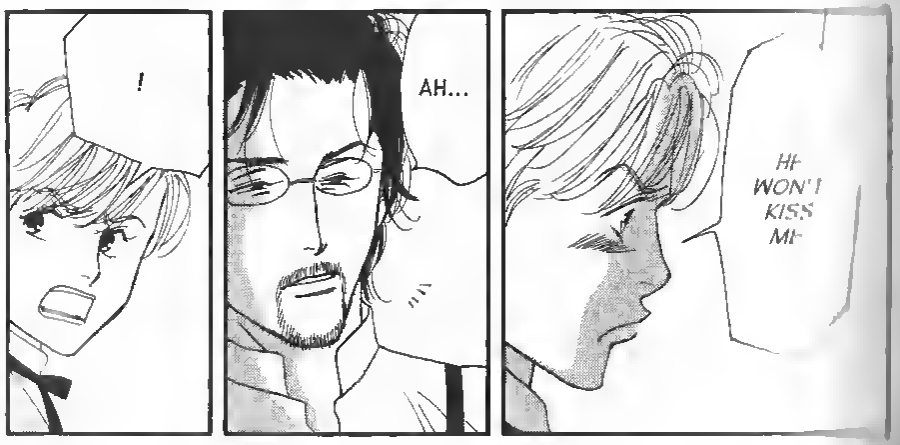
...
...
...
SUCK ME.
WHY? BECAUSE ORAL IS STANDARD IN GAY SEX. I DID IT FOR YOU.
NOW SUCK ME.
HUH?!
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO FELLATE A SEXAROID?!

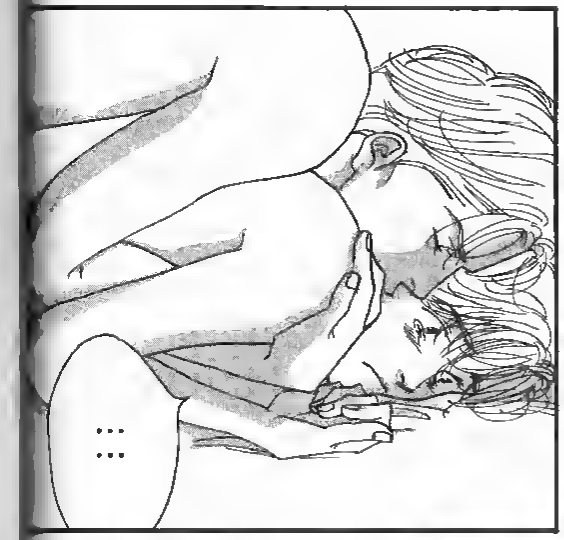
SUCK ME.
YOU DIDN'T LIKE HIM?
ВЗРЫВАЮ!
GRUMP!
HMM...
HIS WAS THE BEST-SHAPED PENIS I'VE CREATED SO FAR...
HE REALLY MADE ME GIVE HIM ORAL SEX!
THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT!

I TRIED A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS LIKE ALTERING THE TASTE OF THE SEMINAL AND COWPER GLAND FLUIDS, BUT...
IT'S A SEXAROID--CAN'T YOU MAKE IT CHOCOLATE-FLAVORED (OR STRAWBERRY-FLAVORED (OR SOMETHING?)
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT HE TASTED SALTY! AND THIS BITTER STUFF CAME OUT FROM THE TIP!
HUH?
AND?
DID YOU HAVE INTER-COURSE?
WELL....
...OH.
UM -
I'M PUTTING IT IN.
...!
BUT...!
JUST RELAX. DIDN'T I JUST THOROUGHLY PREPARE YOUR ANUS WITH MY FINGERS TO GET YOU USED TO IT? IT'LL GO IN, DON'T WORRY.
DON'T PUT IT IN ANY FURTHER...!
NO...I CHANGED MY MIND, NO...!
BUT I'M SCARED...!

RIGHT THERE
IT FEELS GOOD


WAS THERE A PROBLEM?
I MEAN, YEAH, IT FELT GOOD AND ALL, BUT...!


!
AH...
HE WON'T KISS ME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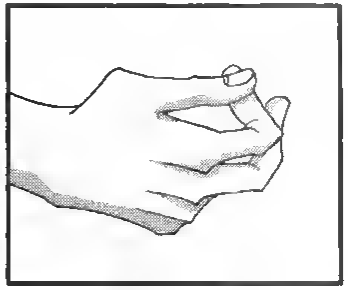
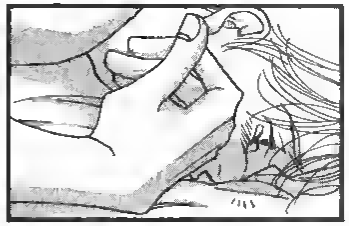
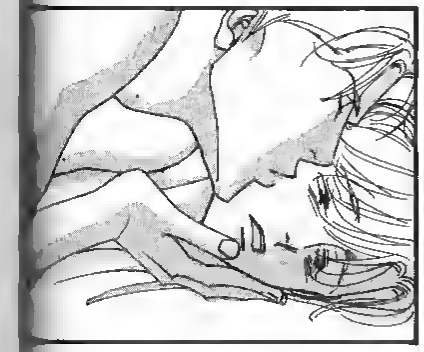


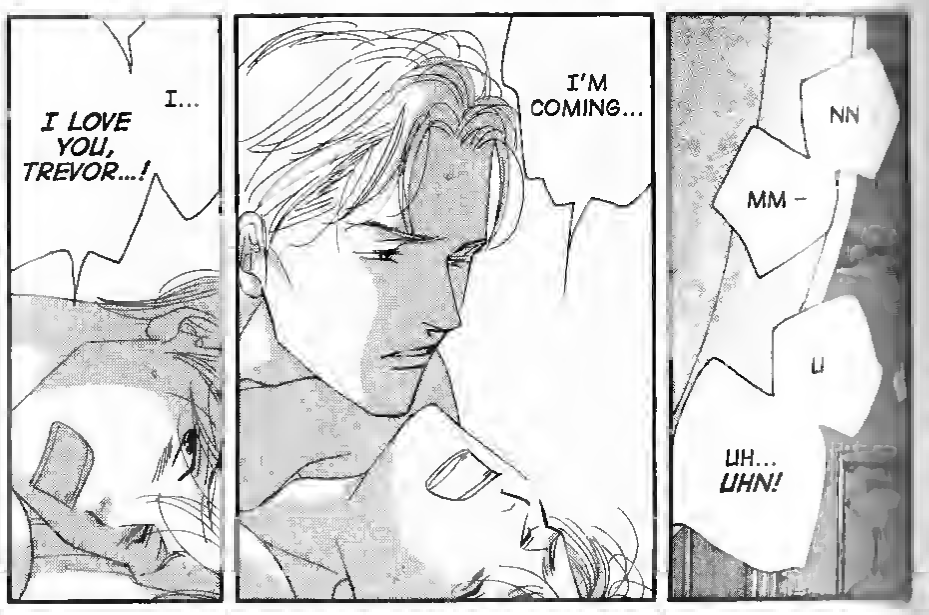


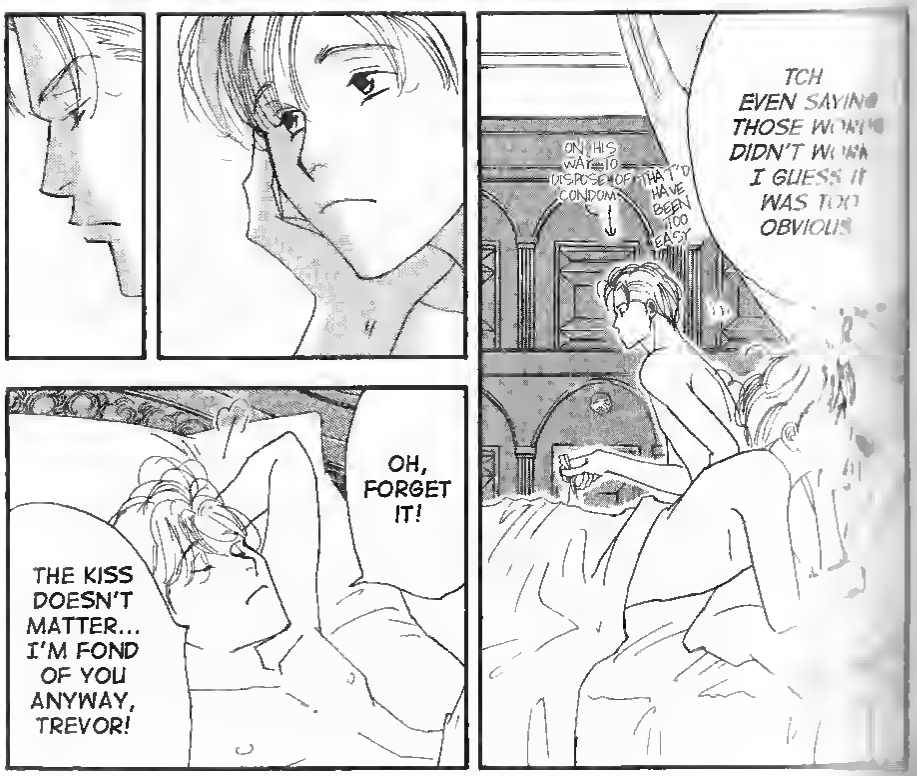


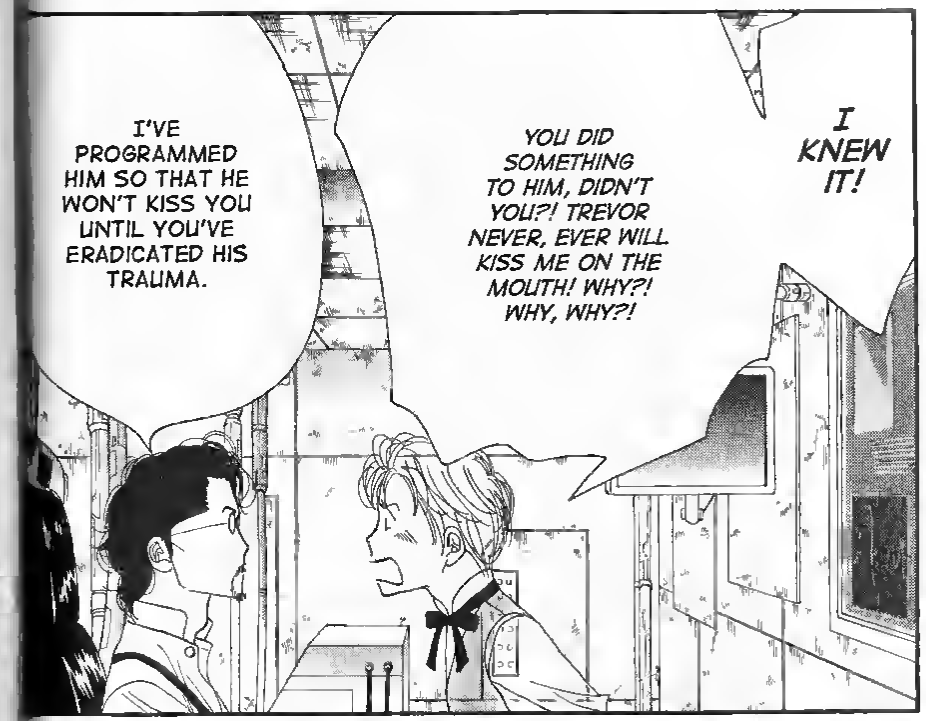
TRUST IN MR. RUFFWOOD'S SKILL. I'LL NOT HARM ONE HAIR ON YOUR HEAD WHILE GIVING YOU THE BEST ORGASM YOU'VE EVER HAD.
IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT.

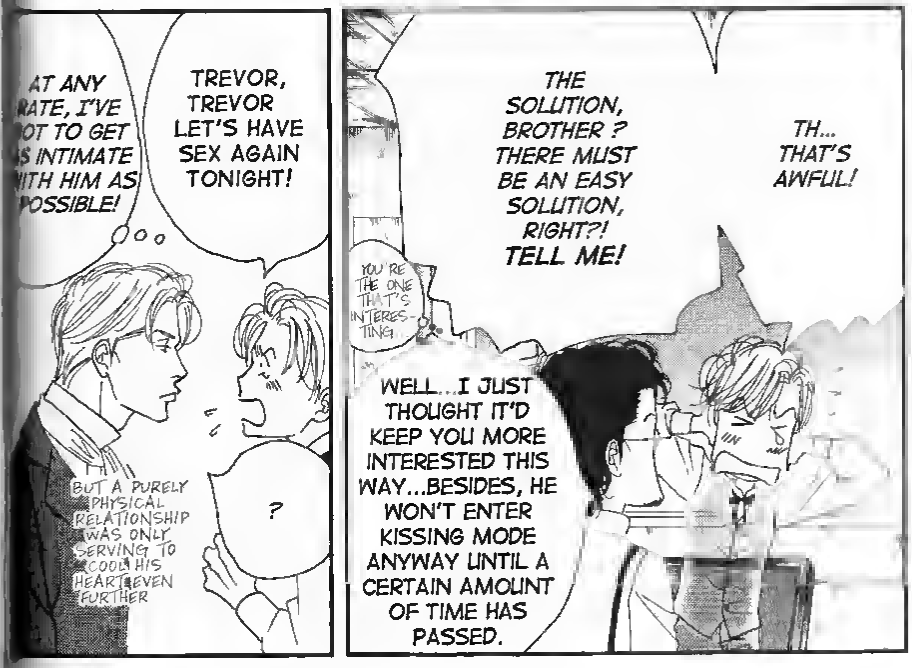
AGHH.

OH...


I...
I LOVE YOU, TREVOR...!
I'M COMING...
NN
MM –
LI
UH... UHN!


TCH EVEN SAYING THOSE WORDS DIDN'T WORK I GUESS IT WAS TOO OBVIOUS
ON HIS WAY TO DISPOSE OF CONDOMS
THAT'D HAVE BEEN TOO EASY
OH, FORGET IT!
THE KISS DOESN'T MATTER... I'M FOND OF YOU ANYWAY, TREVOR!

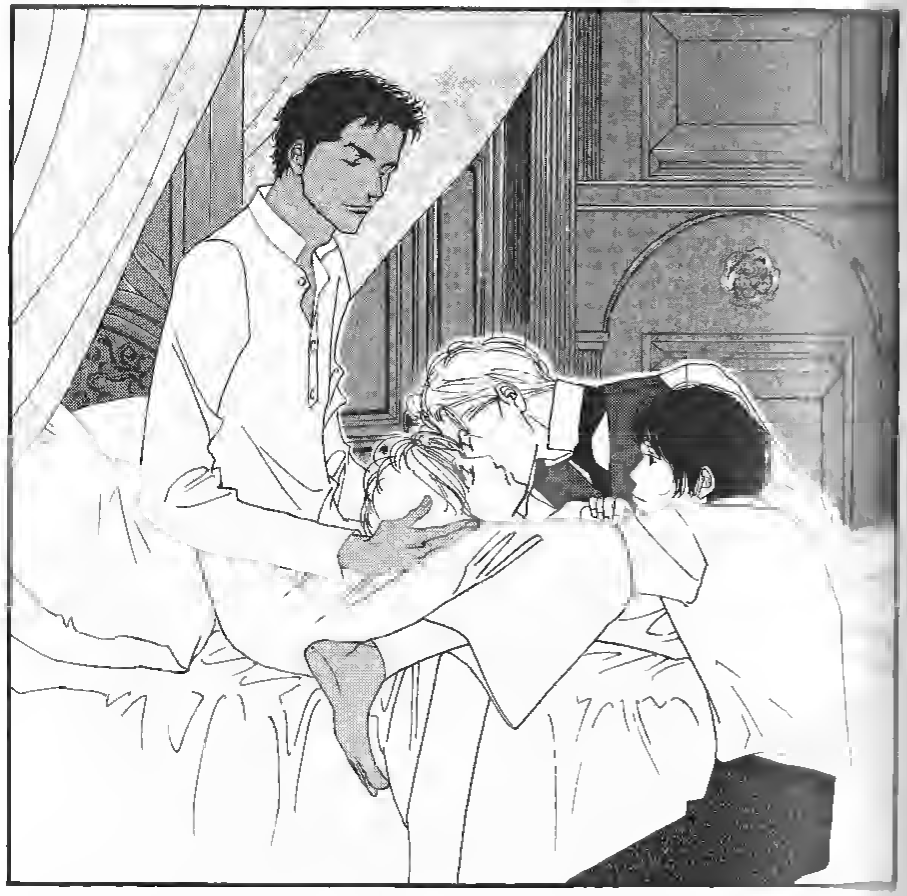

I'VE PROGRAMMED HIM SO THAT HE WON'T KISS YOU UNTIL YOU'VE ERADICATED HIS TRAUMA.
YOU DID SOMETHING TO HIM, DIDN'T YOU?! TREVOR NEVER, EVER WILL KISS ME ON THE MOUTH! WHY?! WHY, WHY?!
I KNEW IT!

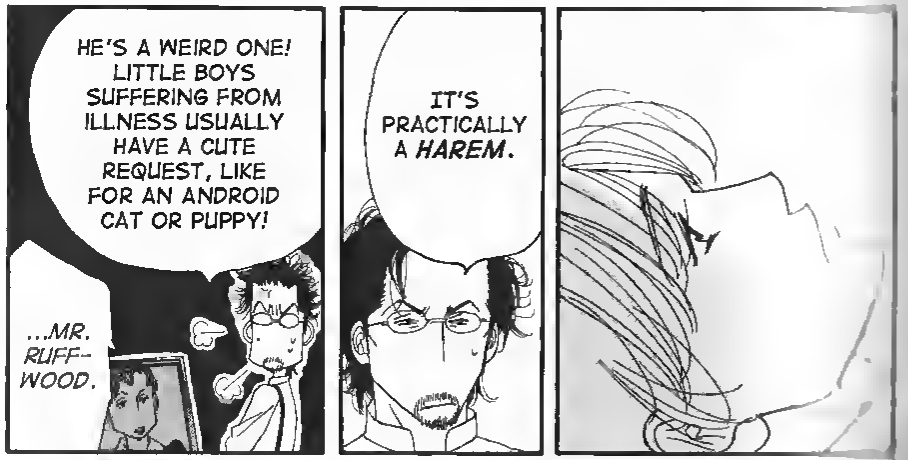

AT ANY RATE, I'VE GOT TO GET AS INTIMATE WITH HIM AS POSSIBLE!
TREVOR, TREVOR LET'S HAVE SEX AGAIN TONIGHT!
BUT A PURELY PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP WAS ONLY SERVING TO COOL HIS HEART EVEN FURTHER
?
THE SOLUTION, BROTHER ? THERE MUST BE AN EASY SOLUTION, RIGHT?! TELL ME!
TH... THAT'S AWFUL!
YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S INTERESTING!
WELL...I JUST THOUGHT IT'D KEEP YOU MORE INTERESTED THIS WAY...BESIDES, HE WON'T ENTER KISSING MODE ANYWAY UNTIL A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TIME HAS PASSED.

...
...
...M –
HUG

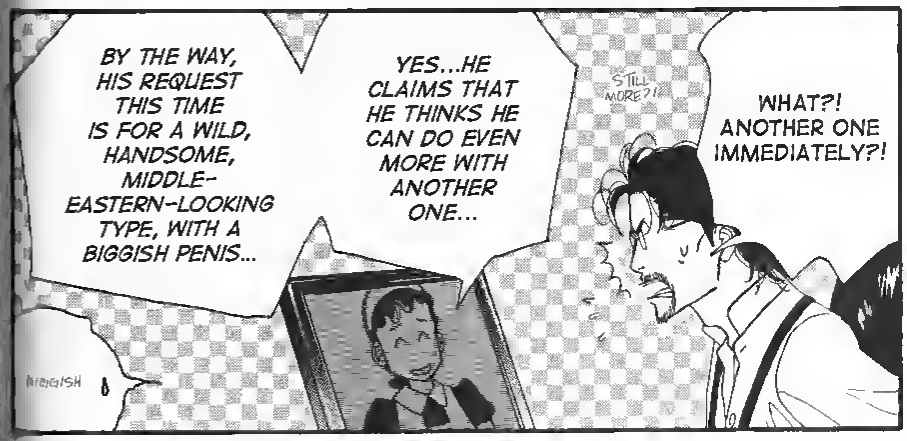
HUH?
...THOSE WORDS...
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THOSE WORDS...
HEH HEH HOW'S THAT?! BIG BRO'S SIMPLE PROGRAM IS NO MATCH FOR ME!
TREVOR –!
BINGO!

A LITTLE BIT YOUNGER... WHO'S GENTLE AND SEEMS KIND...
A NEW SEXAROID?
VERY WELL. WHAT TYPE DO YOU WANT THIS TIME?
IT'S JUST THAT IT SEEMS LIKE WE COULD HAVE MORE FUN WITH THREE OF US THAN WITH JUST TWO!
IN A LOT OF WAYS!
FINE! I'LL MAKE ONE WITH DIFFERENT SEXUAL TECHNIQUES THAN TREVOR - ALL RIGHT?!
POP!
AND HOW ARE THINGS WITH TREVOR GOING?
OH.. FINE, OF COURSE.
HE'S THE INNOCENT TYPE.
OH...DON'T... THAT'S SO... EMBARRASSING...
I SEE. SO BROTHER'S CHALLENGED US WITH THE VIRGINAL TYPE THIS TIME.
HOW DO YOU DO? MY NAME IS HUGH HOPKINS. PLEASE, JUST CALL ME HUGH.
UH... UH... UH -
THAT SHOULD KEEP ARTHUR FROM BORING DOM FOR AWHILE




HE'S A WEIRD ONE! LITTLE BOYS SUFFERING FROM ILLNESS USUALLY HAVE A CUTE REQUEST, LIKE FOR AN ANDROID CAT OR PUPPY!
...MR. RUFF-WOOD.
IT'S PRACTICALLY A HAREM.

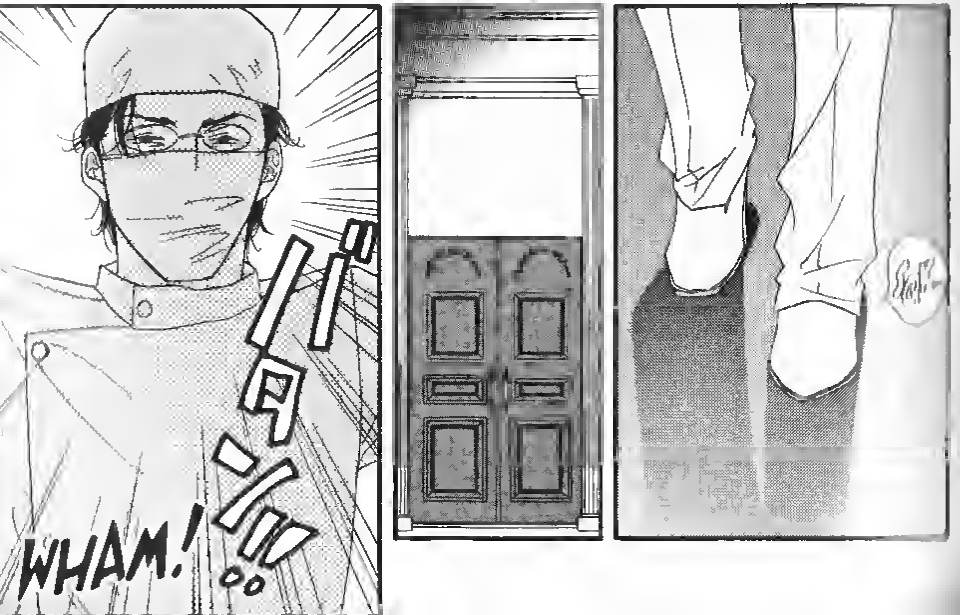
UM... PH...
OHHH - ...THIS IS GREAT - ...!
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
OH - OH - OH - OH - OH - !

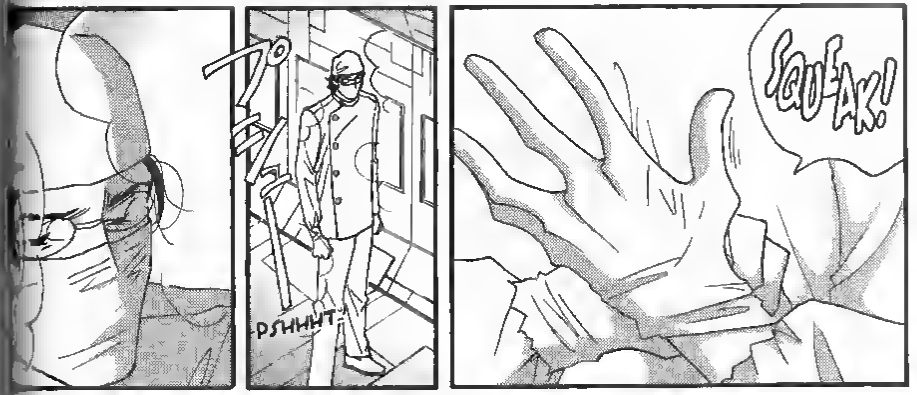

BY THE WAY, HIS REQUEST THIS TIME IS FOR A WILD, HANDSOME, MIDDLE-EASTERN-LOOKING TYPE, WITH A BIGGISH PENIS...
YES...HE CLAIMS THAT HE THINKS HE CAN DO EVEN MORE WITH ANOTHER ONE...
STILL MORE?!
WHAT?! ANOTHER ONE IMMEDIATELY?!

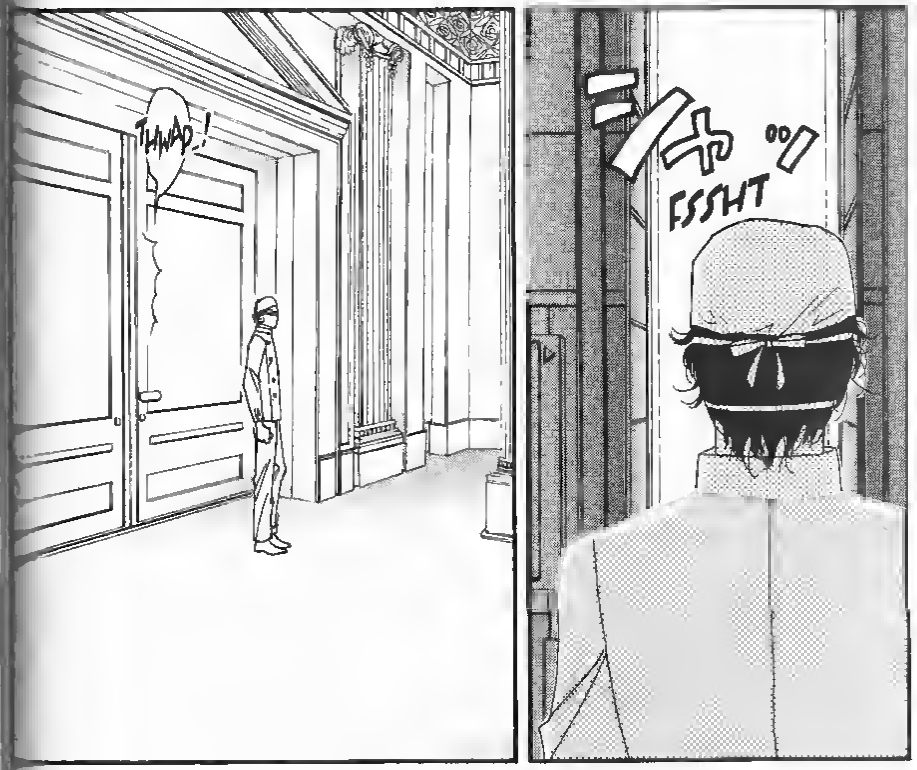
THE MEANING OF THIS LATER BECAME CLEAR.
I AM SENSING A SLIGHT CHANGE IN SIR ARTHUR'S EXPRES-SIONS...
PLEASE BEWARE...
...M -
MR. RUFFWOOD...

CODE RED... MR. RUFFWOOD.
WHAT'S WRONG?! WHAT HAS HAPPENED?!
MS. HAMILTON!
GOOD-BYE.
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF SIR ARTHUR.
I WILL CEASE OPERATION SHORTLY.
MS. HAMILTON!

KCHAK


WHAM!!!


PSHHHT
GUFAK!

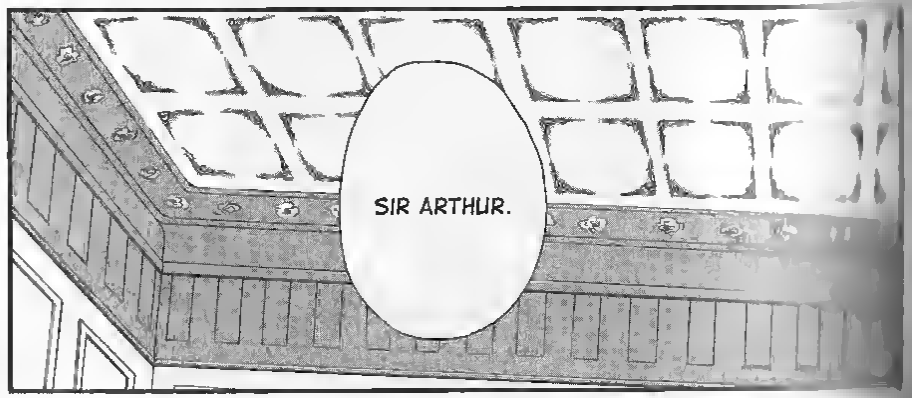

THWAP!
FSSHT

HI.
I GOT BORED.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ...?
IT'S TRUE THAT THEIR HEADS ARE ONLY FILLED WITH MACHINERY! BUT THEIR BODIES MADE FROM CULTIVATED CLONE CELLS ARE ALIVE! THEY EAT, EXCRETE AND AGE, JUST LIKE YOU DO!
BUT THEY'RE STILL NOT HUMAN!
...NO ONE -
EVEN RESISTED...

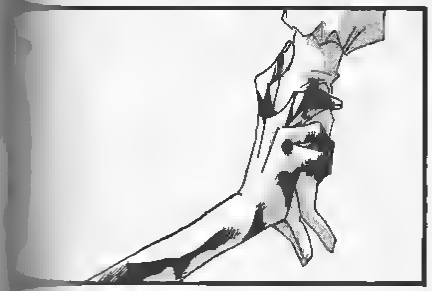
THEN JUST KILL ME!
I PROMISED OUR DEAD MOTHER AND FATHER THAT I WOULD PROTECT YOUR LIFE, NO MATTER WHAT.
THEN WHAT AM I ALIVE FOR?!
...!
SURELY THERE ARE THINGS YOU WERE MEANT TO DO – DON'T TAKE OUT YOUR FRUSTRATIONS ON MY DOLLS I'VE CREATED WITH SO MUCH CARE!
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT, GROW UP TO BECOME A PROPER ADULT!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?! ANDROIDS EXIST ONLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANS! THEY LIVE *ONLY* FOR YOU!

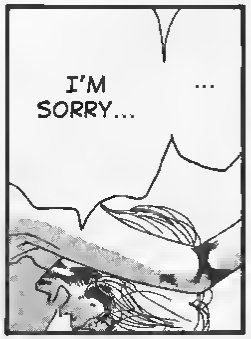
NO MATTER WHAT I DO, I FEEL EMPTY! I HATE STUDYING! BECAUSE THE MORE I LEARN ABOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD, THE MORE I LONG TO EXPERIENCE IT – SO BADLY I WISH I COULD *DIE!*
I WANT TO GO OUTSIDE! I WANT TO GO OUTSIDE, *I WANT TO GO OUTSIDE!*
PLEASE – LET ME OUT, BROTHER!
I DON'T WANT TO JUST SIT HERE IN THIS HUGE, STERILE ROOM ANYMORE! I CAN'T STAND IT!
YOUR BODY IS UNABLE TO IMMUNIZE ITSELF. THE MINUTE YOU WALK OUTSIDE, YOU'LL BE ASSAILED BY BACTERIA AND DIE.
JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE... TO THE GARDEN...!

YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH A MASS-PRODUCTION ANDROID MODEL UNTIL THE NEW MS. HAMILTON ARRIVES.


SIR ARTHUR.

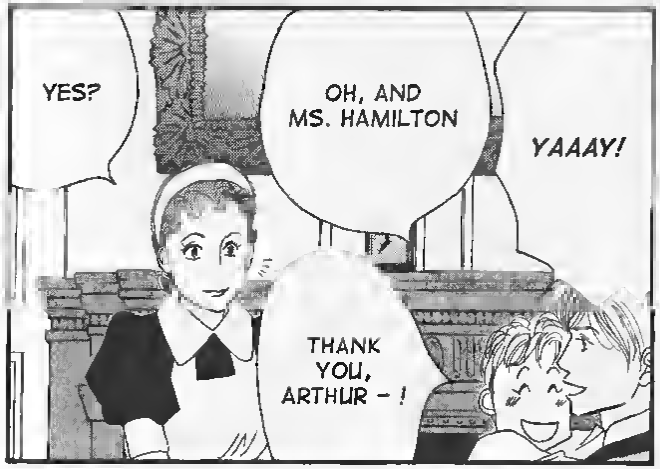
MS. HAMILTON ASKED ME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.

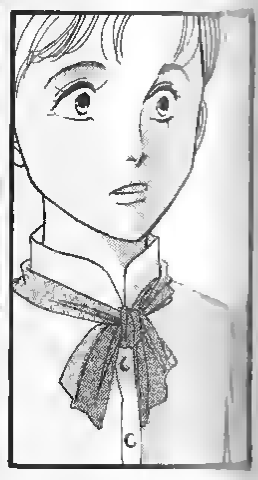



I'M SORRY...
...

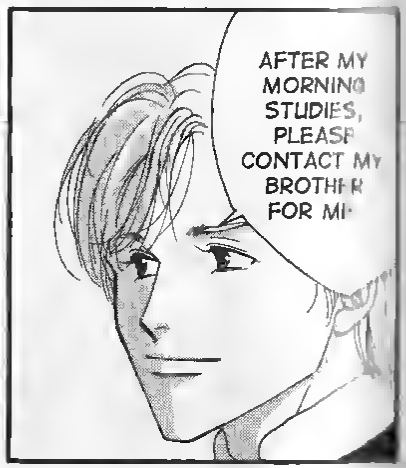
I KILLED HER...
MS. HAMILTON...

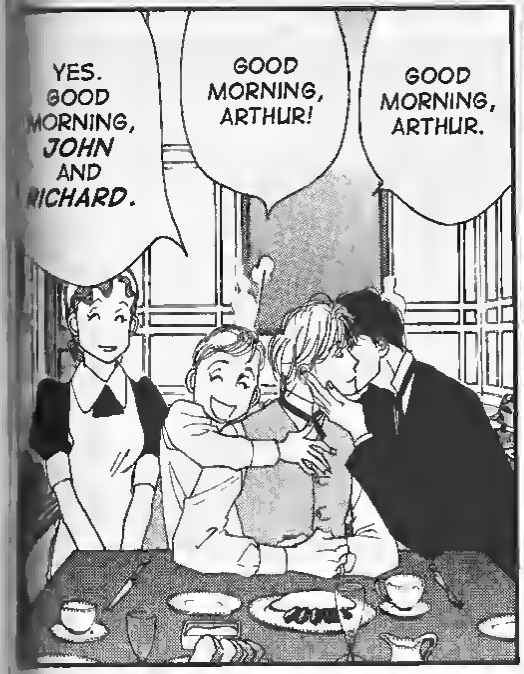
OKAY! THEN I'LL GET ONE FOR YOU, RICHARD! IS THAT ALL RIGHT?
I WANT A GAME! A GAME! A GAME!
...RICHARD, IT'S ARTHUR'S BIRTHDAY NOT YOURS


YES?
OH, AND MS. HAMILTON
YAAAY!
THANK YOU, ARTHUR - !



...OUTWARDLY, YOU'VE GROWN...BUT I SEE YOU'RE THE SAME AS EVER INSIDE.
YO - LONG TIME NO SEE, BRO!


AFTER MY MORNING STUDIES, PLEASE CONTACT MY BROTHER FOR MI


YES. GOOD MORNING, JOHN AND RICHARD.
GOOD MORNING, ARTHUR!
GOOD MORNING, ARTHUR.

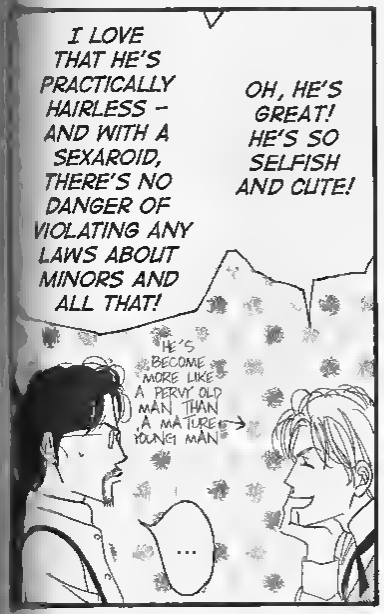
IT WILL SOON BE YOUR EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY, SIR ARTHUR.
DO YOU HAVE ANY REQUESTS FOR A BIRTHDAY PRESENT?

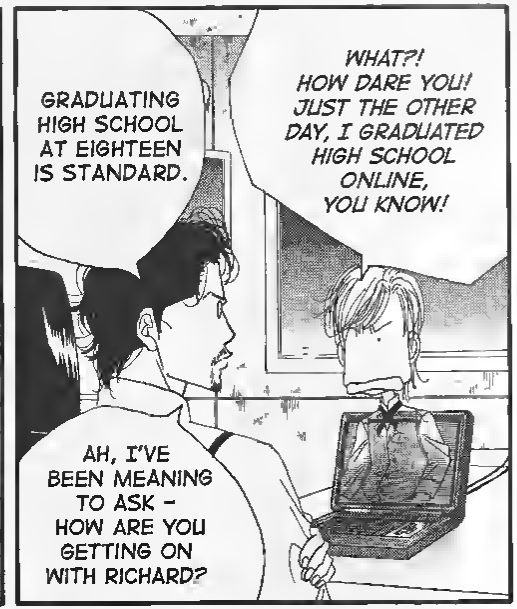
HUUUH? BUT I WANT A NEW GAME MACHINE!
ANYTHING IS FINE! WHATEVER YOU MAKE WILL MAKE ME HAPPY, MS. HAMILTON!

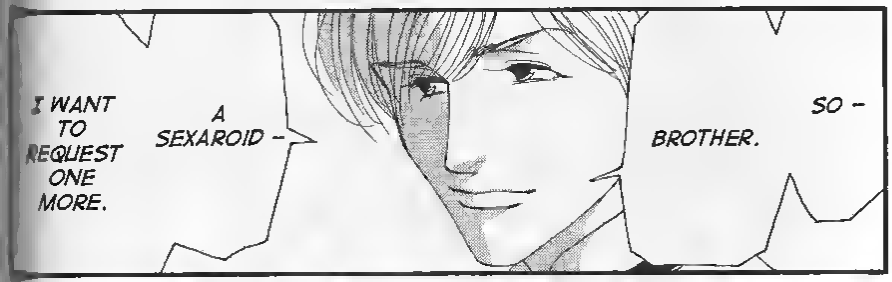
GOOD MORNING, SIR ARTHUR.
GOOD MORNING! MS. HAMILTON!

IT'S MY FINAL REQUEST.

CLICK!


I LOVE THAT HE'S PRACTICALLY HAIRLESS – AND WITH A SEXAROID, THERE'S NO DANGER OF VIOLATING ANY LAWS ABOUT MINORS AND ALL THAT!
OH, HE'S GREAT! HE'S SO SELFISH AND CUTE!
HE'S BECOME MORE LIKE A PERVY OLD MAN THAN A MATURE YOUNG MAN
...


GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL AT EIGHTEEN IS STANDARD.
WHAT?! HOW DARE YOU! JUST THE OTHER DAY, I GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL ONLINE, YOU KNOW!
AH, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK – HOW ARE YOU GETTING ON WITH RICHARD?

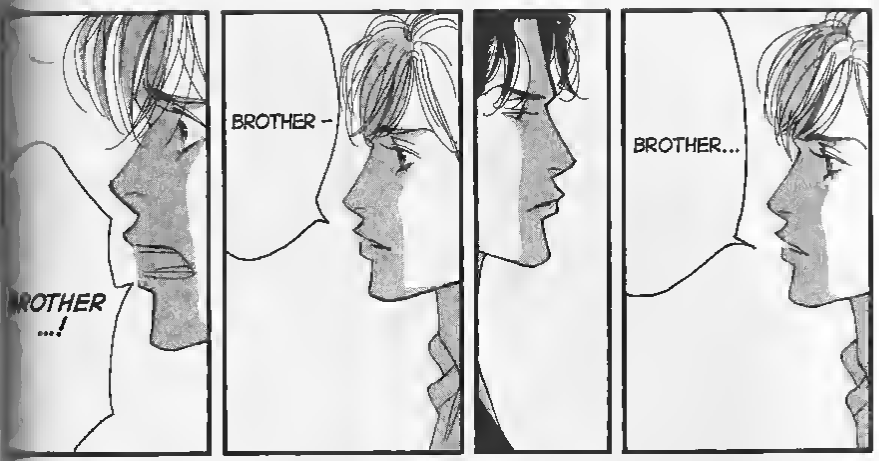

I WANT TO REQUEST ONE MORE.
A SEXAROID –
SO – BROTHER.

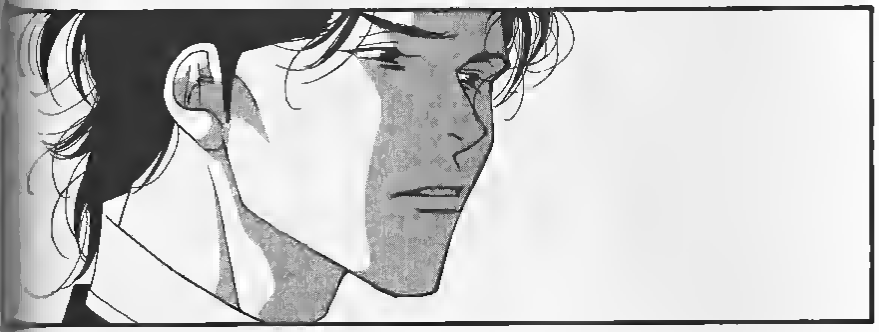
I WANT HIM TO BE THE BEST SEXAROID OUT OF ALL THE ONES YOU'VE MADE THUS FAR, BROTHER.
A TALL MAN IN HIS LATE 30S, WITH A DIFFICULT DISPOSITION... WHOSE NAME IS RUFFWOOD.
WHAT TYPE?

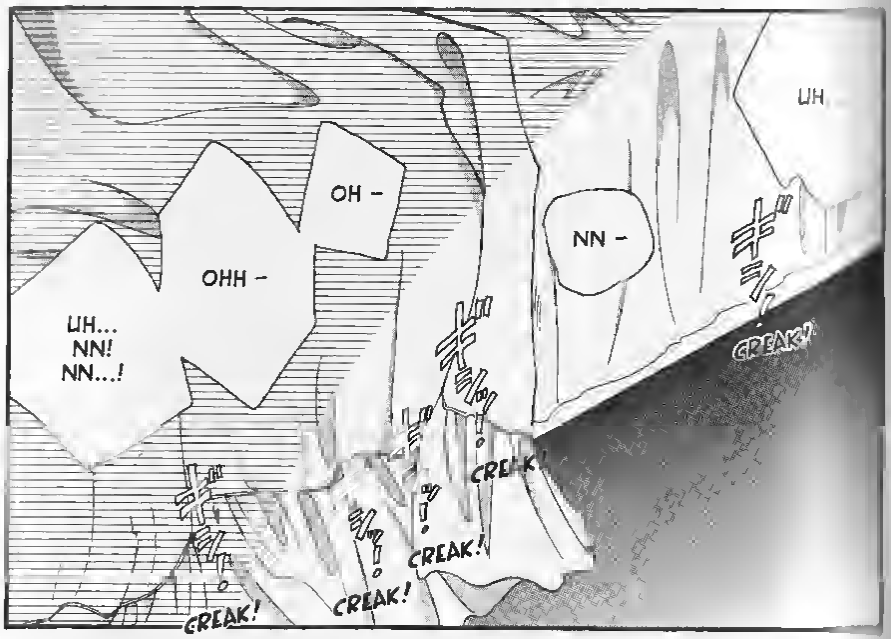
I DIDN'T WANT IT TO HURT YOU WHEN WE KISSED.

...
I ALMOST DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.

CREAK


BROTHER...!
BROTHER –
BROTHER...



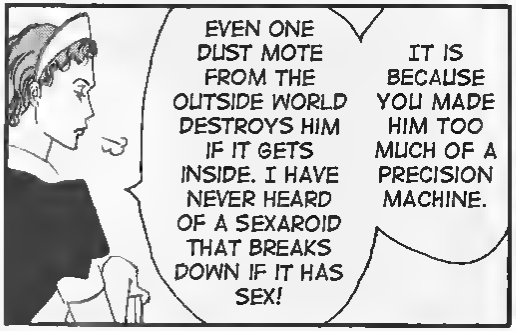

UH
OH –
OHH –
NN –
UH...
NN!
NN...!
CREAK!
CREAK!
CREAK!
CREAK!
CREAK!

UH! UH!
NN...
N...! TH...
THERE...!
IT'S GOOD...
GOOD...
SO
GOOD...!
BROTHER...
I'M
COM...ING...!

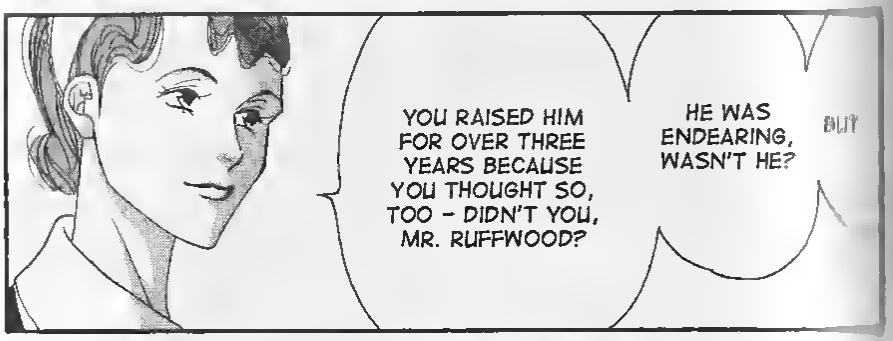
IT WAS TO DIE IN YOUR ARMS...
I'VE FINALLY REALIZED MY PURPOSE FOR LIVING.
OH...IT'S LIKE A DREAM...
ISN'T THAT RIGHT...? BROTHER...
HEY, BROTHER...
YOU *ARE* MY BIG BROTHER... AREN'T YOU...?

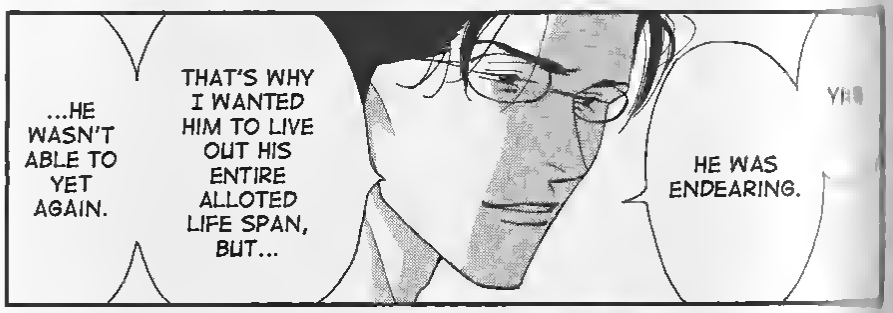
CLONK

...YES.


EVEN ONE DUST MOTE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD DESTROYS HIM IF IT GETS INSIDE. I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF A SEXAROID THAT BREAKS DOWN IF IT HAS SEX!
IT IS BECAUSE YOU MADE HIM TOO MUCH OF A PRECISION MACHINE.

SO HE DID BREAK AFTER ALL.


YOU RAISED HIM FOR OVER THREE YEARS BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT SO, TOO - DIDN'T YOU, MR. RUFFWOOD?
HE WAS ENDEARING, WASN'T HE?
BUT

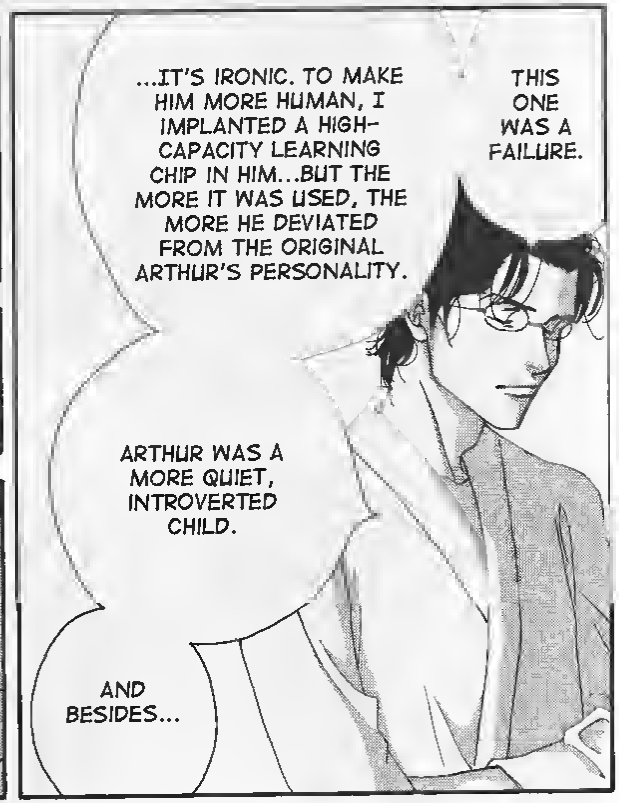

...HE WASN'T ABLE TO YET AGAIN.
THAT'S WHY I WANTED HIM TO LIVE OUT HIS ENTIRE ALLOTED LIFE SPAN, BUT...
YES
HE WAS ENDEARING.

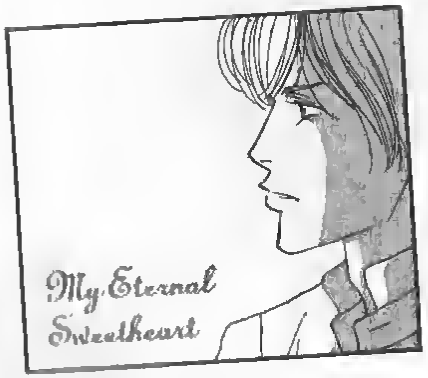
...DO YOU THINK HE REALIZED HE WAS AN ANDROID?

MS. HAMILTON.
YES?
SEXAROIDS WERE MADE TO HAVE SEX WITH PEOPLE PLEASE DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF NEEDLESSLY OVER IT YOU STILL HAVE PLENTY OF THE ORIGINAL SIR ARTHUR'S CELLS IN STOCK...

MY REAL LITTLE BROTHER WOULD NEVER HAVE SAID HE WANTED TO SLEEP WITH ME.

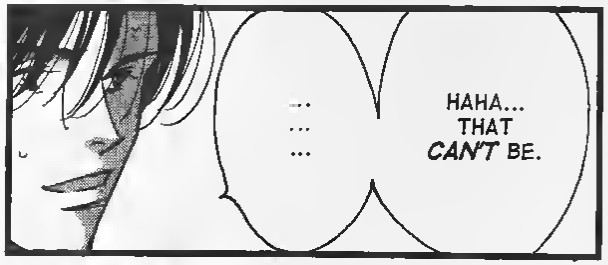
AH, WELL...
...
IT IS ALL TO BRING BACK THE LITTLE BROTHER YOU LOVED SO MUCH, MR. RUFFWOOD. I SUPPOSE IT WOULD HAVE TO BE PRECISION WORK.

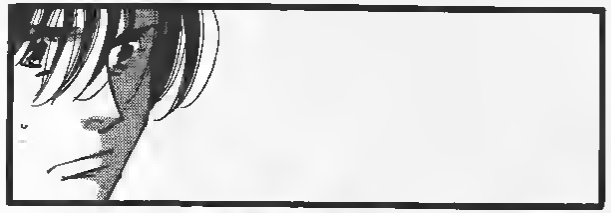

...IT'S IRONIC. TO MAKE HIM MORE HUMAN, I IMPLANTED A HIGH-CAPACITY LEARNING CHIP IN HIM...BUT THE MORE IT WAS USED, THE MORE HE DEVIATED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTHUR'S PERSONALITY.
THIS ONE WAS A FAILURE.
ARTHUR WAS A MORE QUIET, INTROVERTED CHILD.
AND BESIDES...


My Eternal
Sweetheart

BECAUSE HUMANS HAD BECOME SO FOOLISH AND INDECENT, GOD PUNISHED THEM BY ERASING THEM FROM THE EARTH.

FAIRYLAND





I HAVE NO IDEA HOW THIS HAPPENED. IT'S AS IF I'M THE LAST PERSON LEFT ON EARTH.

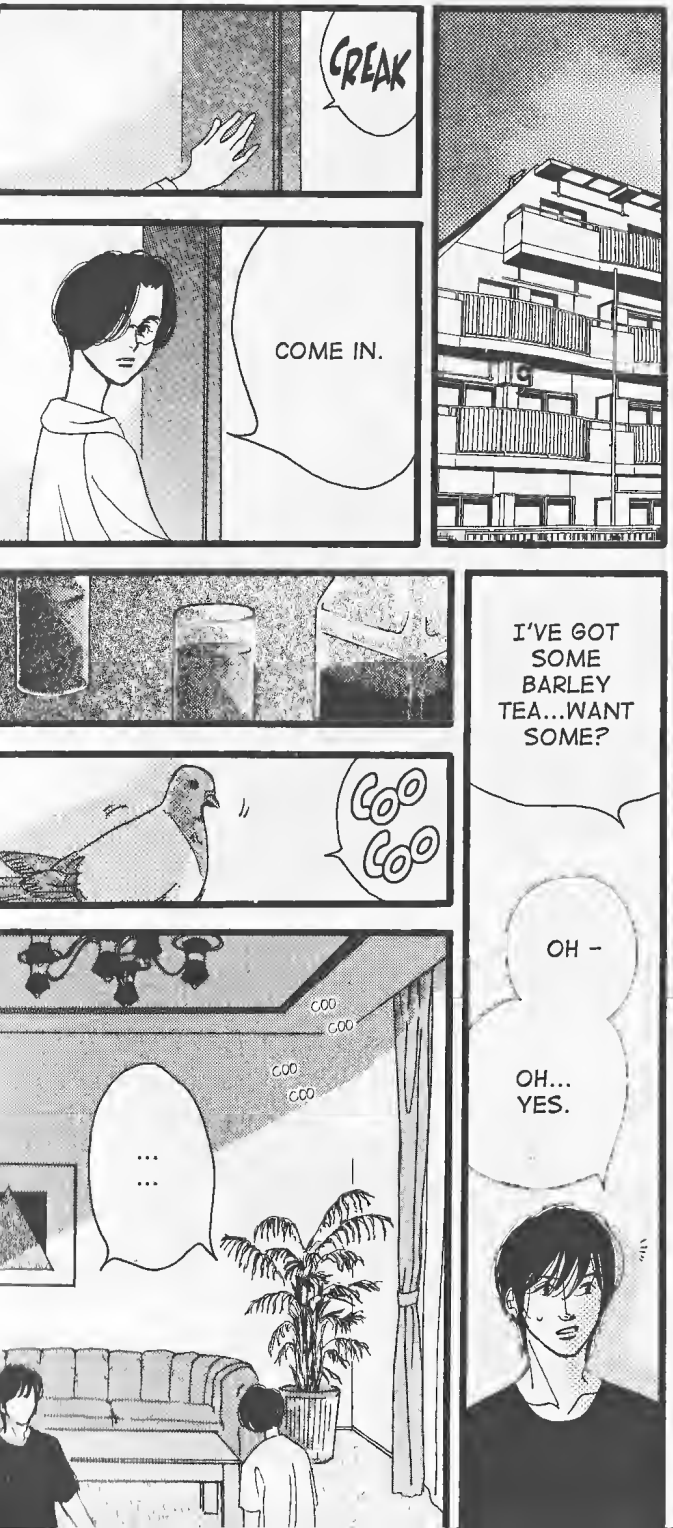
IT'S BEEN A MONTH SINCE I'VE BEEN WANDERING AROUND THIS TOKYO DEVOID OF PEOPLE.

...DARN
I THOUGHT I WAS THE LAST ONE LEFT ON EARTH.
...I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KEEP ME FROM BEING ALONE.
S... SORRY.
BUT WHY DID YOU RUN FROM ME?
OH –
LET GO!
MY MOTHER AND LITTLE BROTHER? THEY TURNED TO SAND IN FRONT OF MY EYES AND DISAPPEARED. MY FATHER, TOO PROBABLY.
SO YOU'VE BEEN ALL ALONE THIS LAST MONTH AS WELL...?
WHERE'S YOUR FAMILY?
WHY HAS THIS HAPPENED?

...A... MIRAGE...?
WHIRL!
Y, YOU!
– NO, IT'S NOT!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
I'M SURE HE RAN WITH ALL HIS MIGHT. BUT HE'S JUST A KID, AFTER ALL. I CAUGHT UP TO HIM IN UNDER THREE MINUTES...

HOLD ON.
THAT DAY... I RETURNED HOME FROM WORK BEFORE NINE...THEN, AT TEN O'CLOCK... AT TEN...
WHAT DID I DO AT TEN...?
THAT'S ALL I KNOW. WELL, BYE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THE 10 O'CLOCK NEWSCASTER DISAPPEARED THAT WAY, TOO.
...ON THE TV.
TURNED TO SAND...
...AND DISAPPEARED?

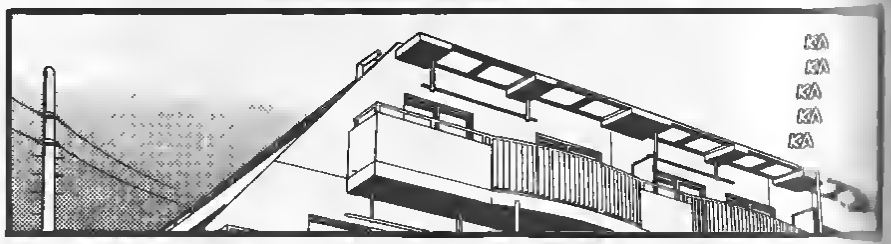
WHO CARES ! NO ONE'S AROUND!
THERE'S WATER, THERE'S FOOD... THE AIR CONDITIONING STILL WORKS.
BUT NO MATTER HOW LONG I WAIT, THE NEXT MANGA EPISODE NEVER COMES OUT.
...AND ALL THE FOOD REMAINS UNSPOILED, EVEN IN THIS HEAT!
AND YET, EVEN AFTER A MONTH, THE NEON LIGHTS ARE STILL LIT, THE VENDING MACHINES STILL WORK...
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S STRANGE? ALL THE PEOPLE DISAPPEARING FROM THE CITY LIKE THIS -
WAIT!


CREAK
COME IN.
I'VE GOT SOME BARLEY TEA...WANT SOME?
COO COO
COO
COO
COO
COO
...
...
OH -
OH... YES.

...
...
...

YOU REALLY KNOW SOMETHING, DON'T YOU?
NO, I DON'T.
YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON I'VE SEEN IN AN ENTIRE MONTH.
WELL, EVEN IF YOU DON'T, I'M COMING ALONG WITH YOU.

I'M KAORU ORIGUCHI. FIRST-YEAR JUNIOR HIGH.
HAHA -
OH -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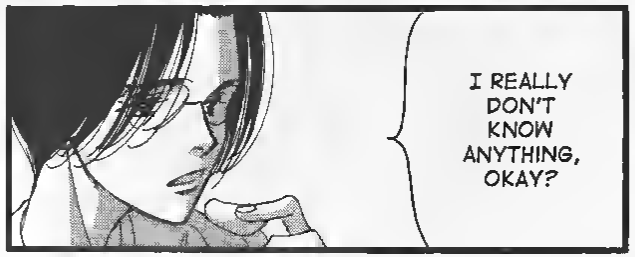
I REALLY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, OKAY?

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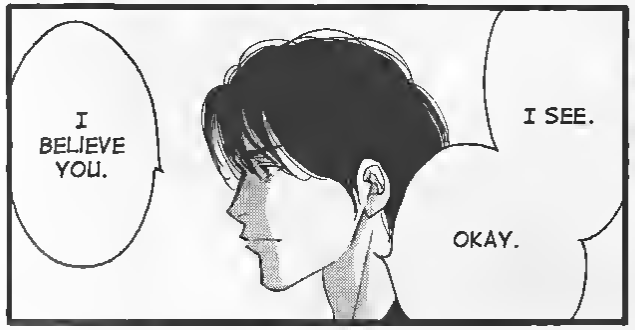
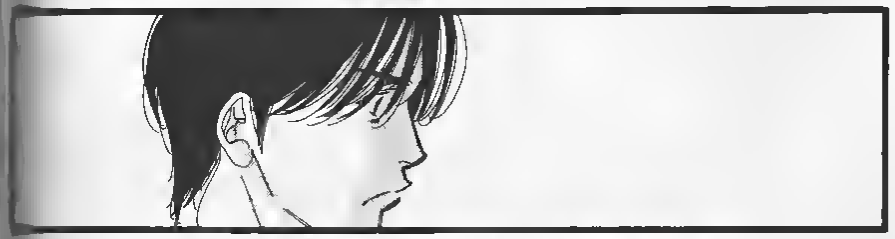
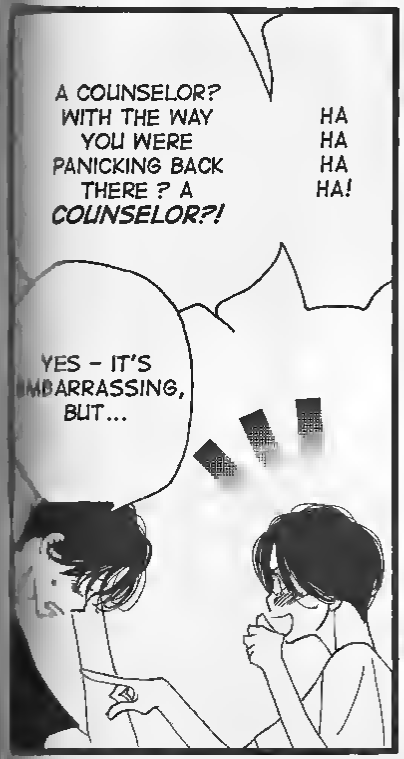
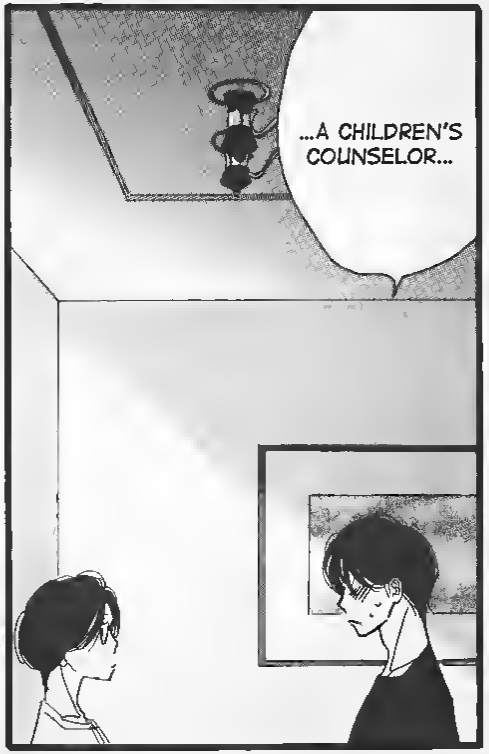

I BELIEVE YOU.
I SEE.
OKAY.

I'M RYOHEI SAWADA. I'M -
COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE BEEN IN PANIC MODE FOR A MONTH - THAT'S WHY I SPOKE TO YOU SO HARSHLY...
SORRY ABOUT BEFORE...

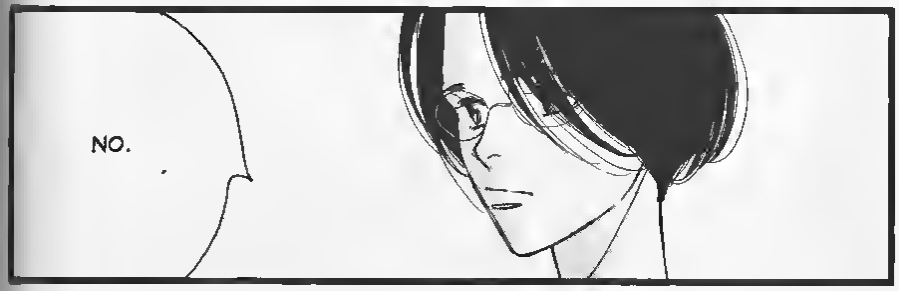


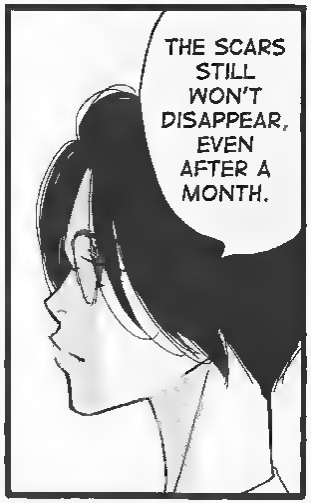

A COUNSELOR? WITH THE WAY YOU WERE PANICKING BACK THERE ? A COUNSELOR?!
HA HA HA HA!
YES - IT'S EMBARRASSING, BUT...


...A CHILDREN'S COUNSELOR...

I WAS BEING BULLIED IN SCHOOL.

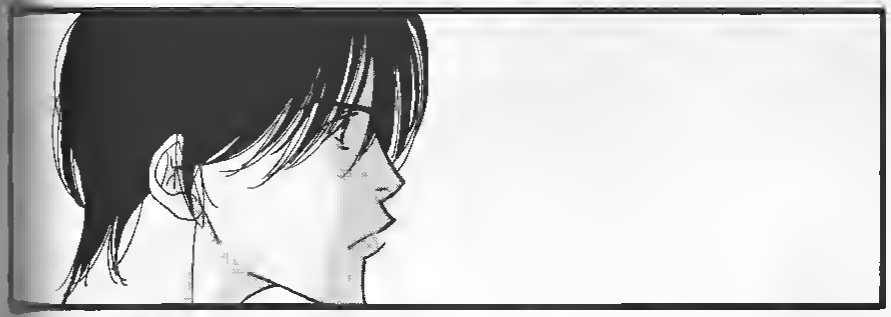
BUT WEREN'T YOU LONELY ALL BY YOURSELF, KAORU?


NO.

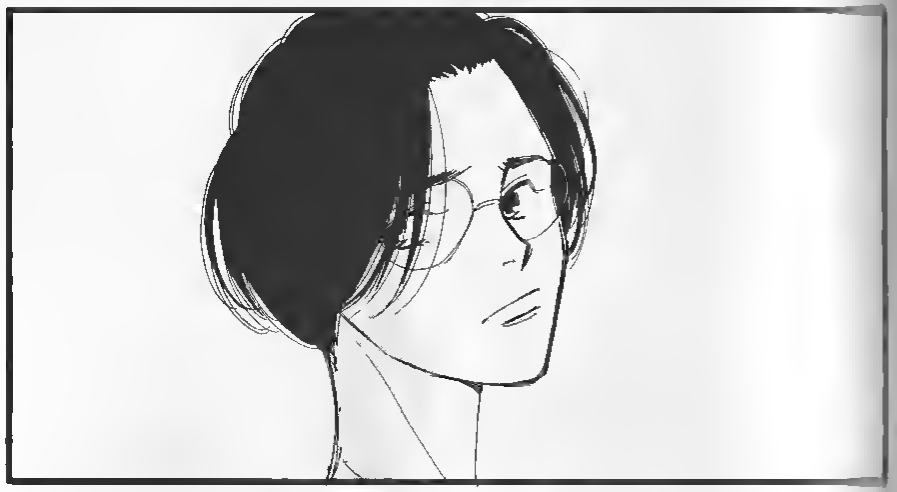

THE SCARS STILL WON'T DISAPPEAR, EVEN AFTER A MONTH.

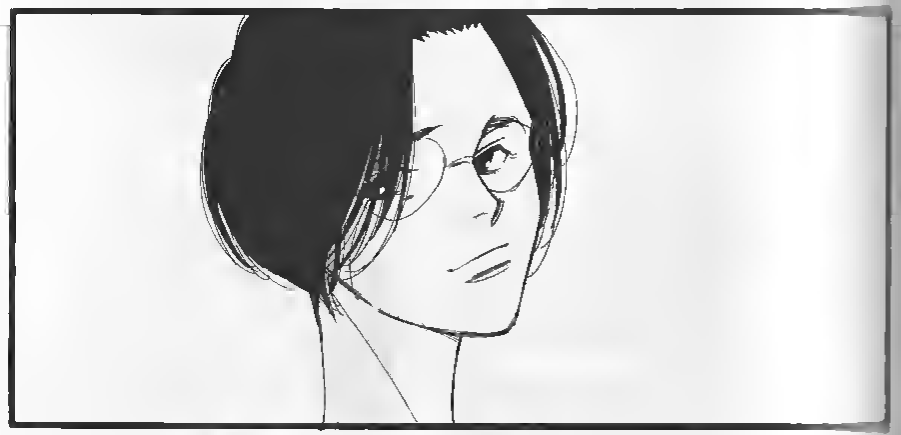
I WAS HAPPY, LIKE IN A DREAM.

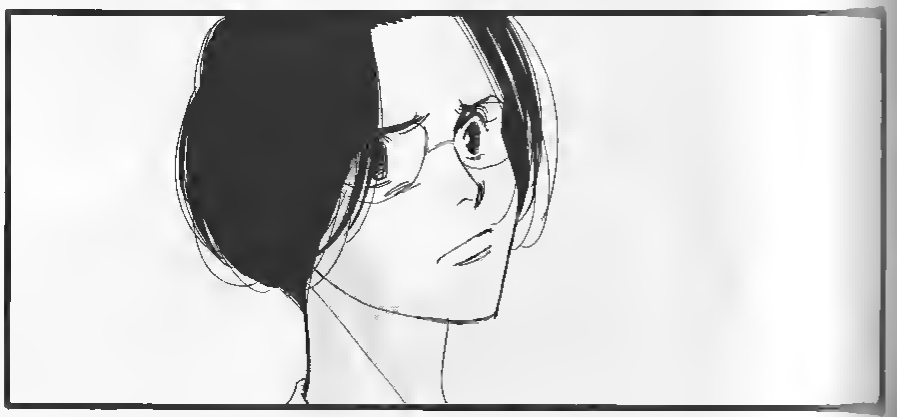
I WISHED THEY WOULD ALL JUST DIE.



BUT...
OF COURSE, I DIDN'T WISH IT ON MOTHER OR ANY OF THE OTHER PEOPLE...



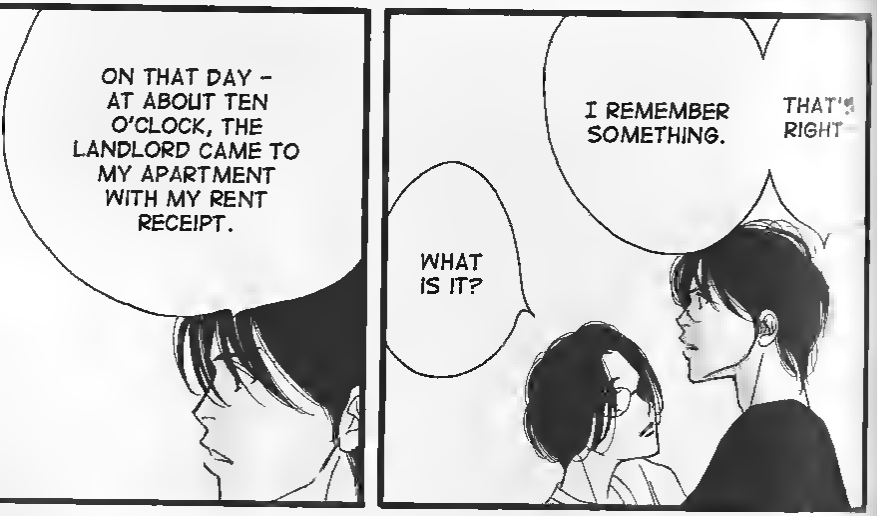




KAORU, YOU'RE *NOT* "THE LOWEST."
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES ARE LEARNED. THE REASON WHY A CHILD WHO GROWS UP IN A VIOLENT, ABUSIVE FAMILY BECOMES VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE HIMSELF IS BECAUSE HE ONLY EVER LEARNED TO REACT WITH VIOLENCE FROM HIS PARENTS
SO IT'S NO WONDER THAT YOU WHO HAVE SUFFERED SUCH TORMENT AT OTHERS' HANDS WOULD WISH A LITTLE SUFFERING ON OTHERS, TOO.

I KNOW I'M THE LOWEST! BUT IF IT MEANS I CAN LIVE WITHOUT BEING BULLIED, I *DON'T* MISS MY FAMILY EITHER!
IT'S NOT TRUE WHAT THEY SAY THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN HURT THEMSELVES CAN UNDERSTAND OTHER PEOPLE'S SUFFERINGS.

KISS..
SHIVER..


ON THAT DAY - AT ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK, THE LANDLORD CAME TO MY APARTMENT WITH MY RENT RECEIPT.
I REMEMBER SOMETHING.
THAT'S RIGHT
WHAT IS IT?

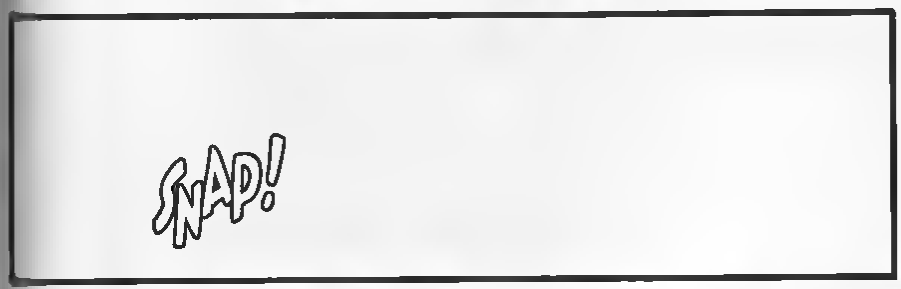
NOW DO YOU STILL PREFER TO BE ALONE...?

SAWADA-SAN...
UH-UH...
NO... UH-UH...

FSSSHH

YES, THAT'S RIGHT!
MY LANDLORD TURNED INTO SAND IN FRONT OF MY EYES AND DISAPPEARED... AND THE PEACH FELL TO THE GROUND.
I SAID, "THEY SENT ME SOME PEACHES FROM THE COUNTRY," AND JUST AS I HANDED HIM A PEACH...

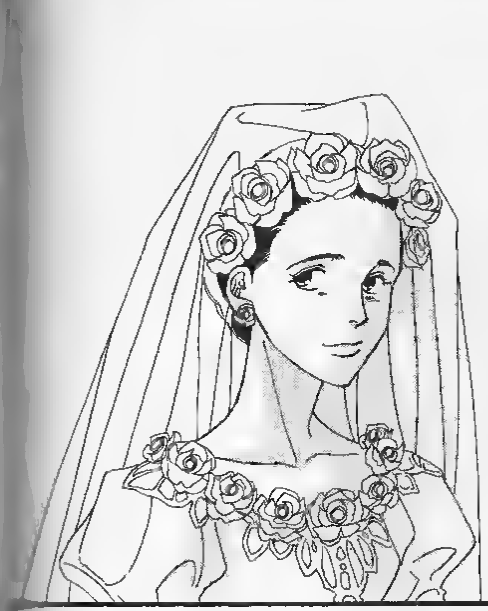
THEN RIGHT AFTER THAT, I TURNED TO SAND, TOO
THAT'S RIGHT.


SNAP!

ZWOOSH

THIS IS HOW GOD PUNISHED EVEN THE LAST REMAINING PERSON ON EARTH.

AND SO -



THIS IS MY WIFE.

YES, MY WIFE.

MY SECOND WIFE.

I MET HER JUST TWO MONTHS AGO.

THIS PLACE ISN'T VERY GOOD...

YES, RIGHT AWAY.

CHECK, PLEASE.

HM?

OH, YES.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

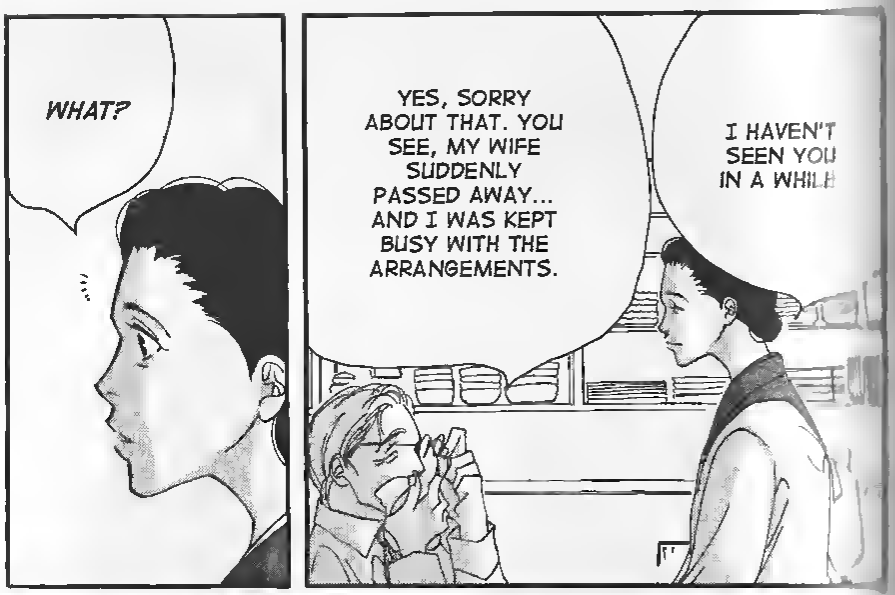
UM –

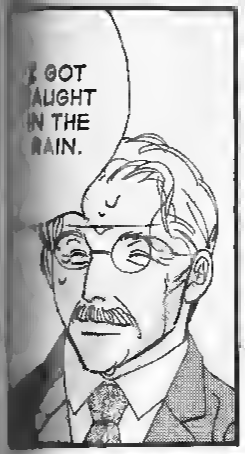
PLEASE VISIT US AGAIN...

THANK YOU VERY, VERY MUCH.

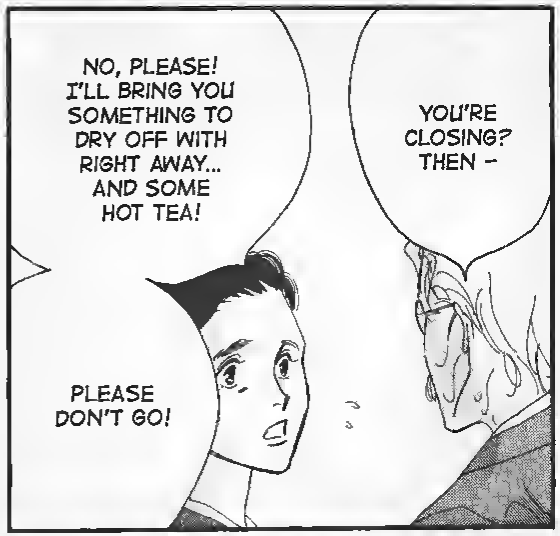
BEFORE I REALIZED IT, MY FEET WERE ALWAYS HEADED FOR THIS STORE.

HM? UH -
YES.
REALLY?
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY... IT'S JUST THAT I PREFER MINE A LITTLE BIT TART, SO...
I...I'M SO SORRY! I KNEW IT WAS TOO SOUR!
NO, REALLY - IT'S FINE. YES, QUITE GOOD, ACTUALLY.
I'M SO GLAD!

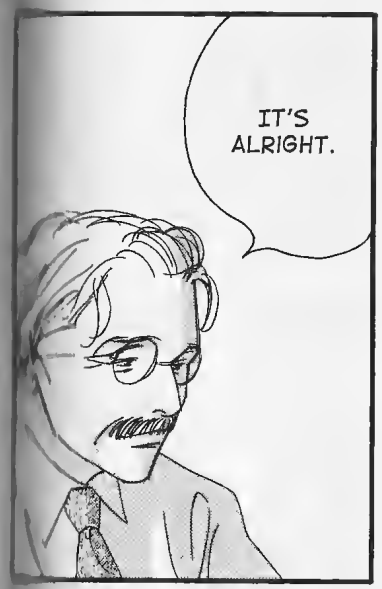

WHAT?
YES, SORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU SEE, MY WIFE SUDDENLY PASSED AWAY... AND I WAS KEPT BUSY WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE



I BECAME A REGULAR PATRON OF THIS STORE.



I'M SORRY...


IT'S ALRIGHT.

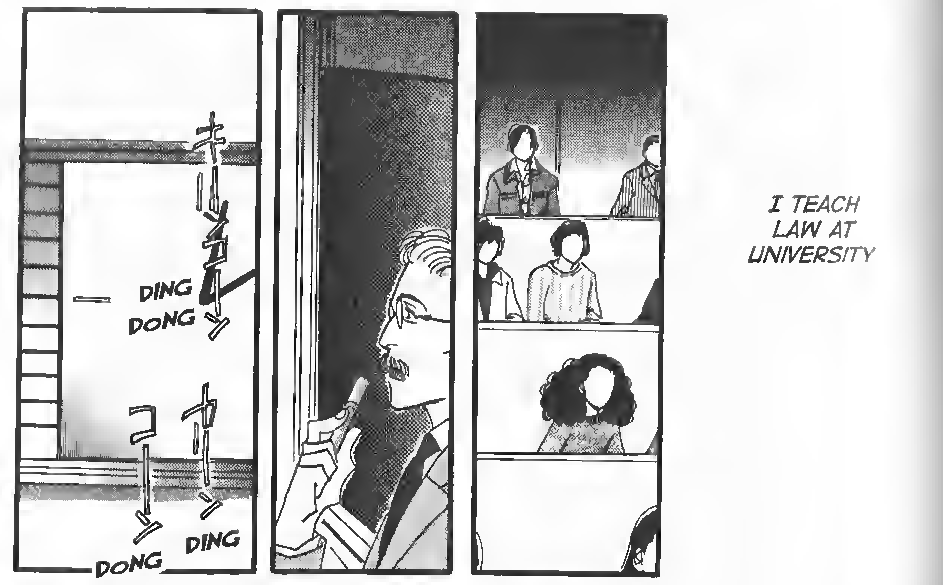
I -
I'M SO SORRY... I...

I'M SORRY, I'M SO SORRY.
NO, IT'S OKAY REALLY.
I'M SORRY FOR BEING SO NOSY -

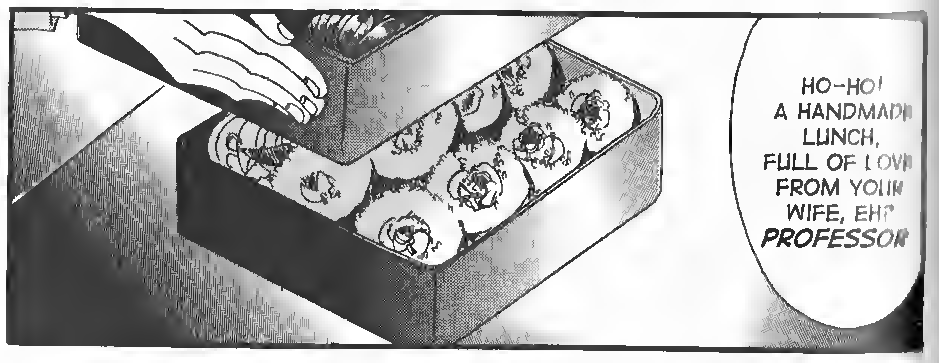
LET'S GET MARRIED.

...BUT IT WAS NO GOOD. I'VE ONLY EVER BEEN MISTREATED BY MEN ALL MY LIFE.
MY MOTHER SHE NAMED ME SACHIKO IN THE HOPE THAT I WOULD BE A HAPPY CHILD
BUT YOU'RE DIFFERENT, RIGHT...? I'M *FINALLY* GOING TO BE HAPPY...?
OH...!
I'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY...
I'LL...
YES THAT'S RIGHT
PLEASE, DON'T *EVER* ABANDON ME...
DON'T ABANDON M

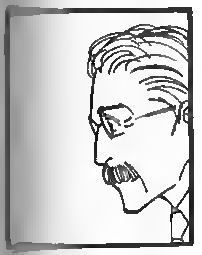
AND SO, SACHIKO AND I WERE MARRIED. THE WEDDING CEREMONY WAS HER EARNEST DREAM COME TRUE.

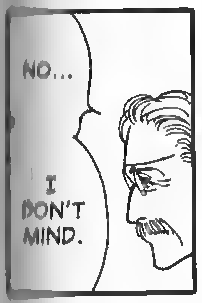


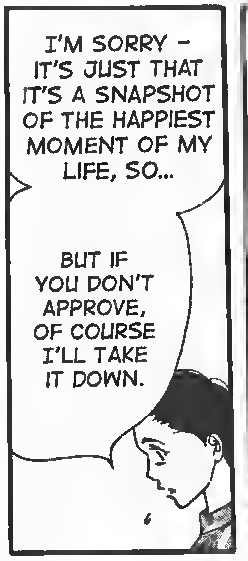
I TEACH LAW AT UNIVERSITY

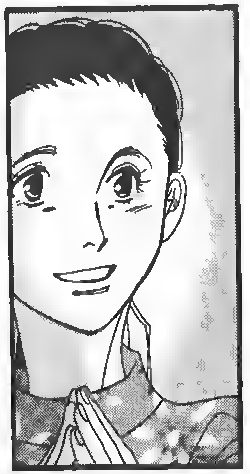


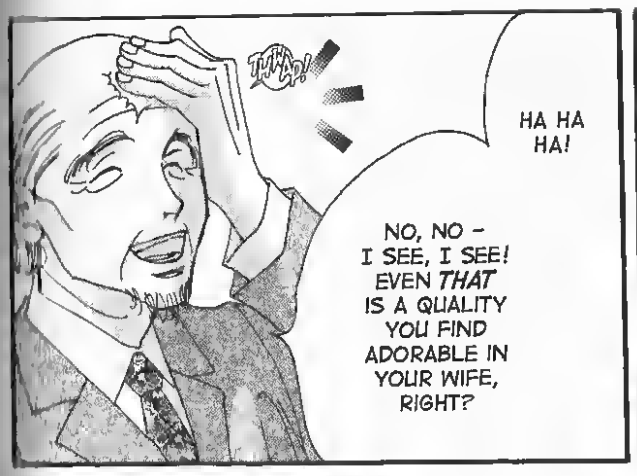
NORMALLY, THIS WOULD BE THE POINT WHERE I OFFER YOU A TASTE, BUT...
HAHA...THAT VOLUME OF FOOD AND THE DETAILED DECORATION THE HALLMARK OF A NEWLYWED BRIDE. IT MAKES ME JEALOUS!







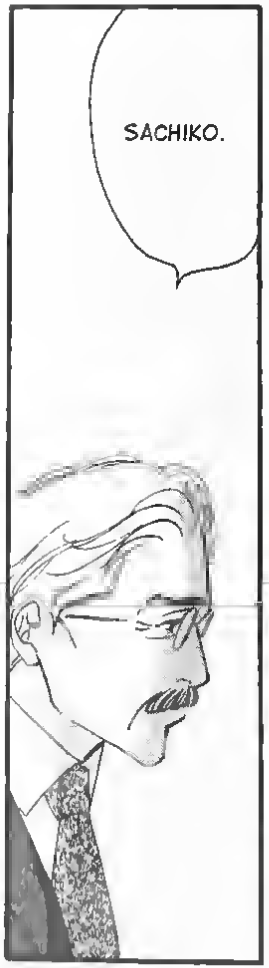


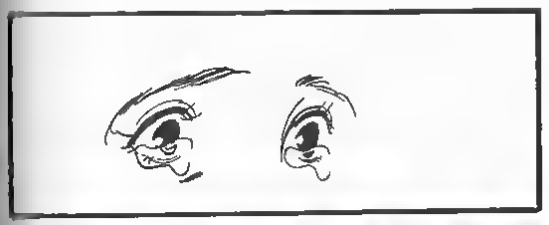


AND YET -

I WONDER WHEN IT WAS MY FEELINGS BEGAN TO CHANGE... IT STARTED WITH THE SMALLEST OF INCIDENTS.

FLINCH!


SACHIKO.



I'M SORRY, I'M SO SORRY – YOU DON'T LIKE IT!
SACH–
I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T EVEN DISCUSS IT WITH YOU BEFOREHAND... HOW DARE I!

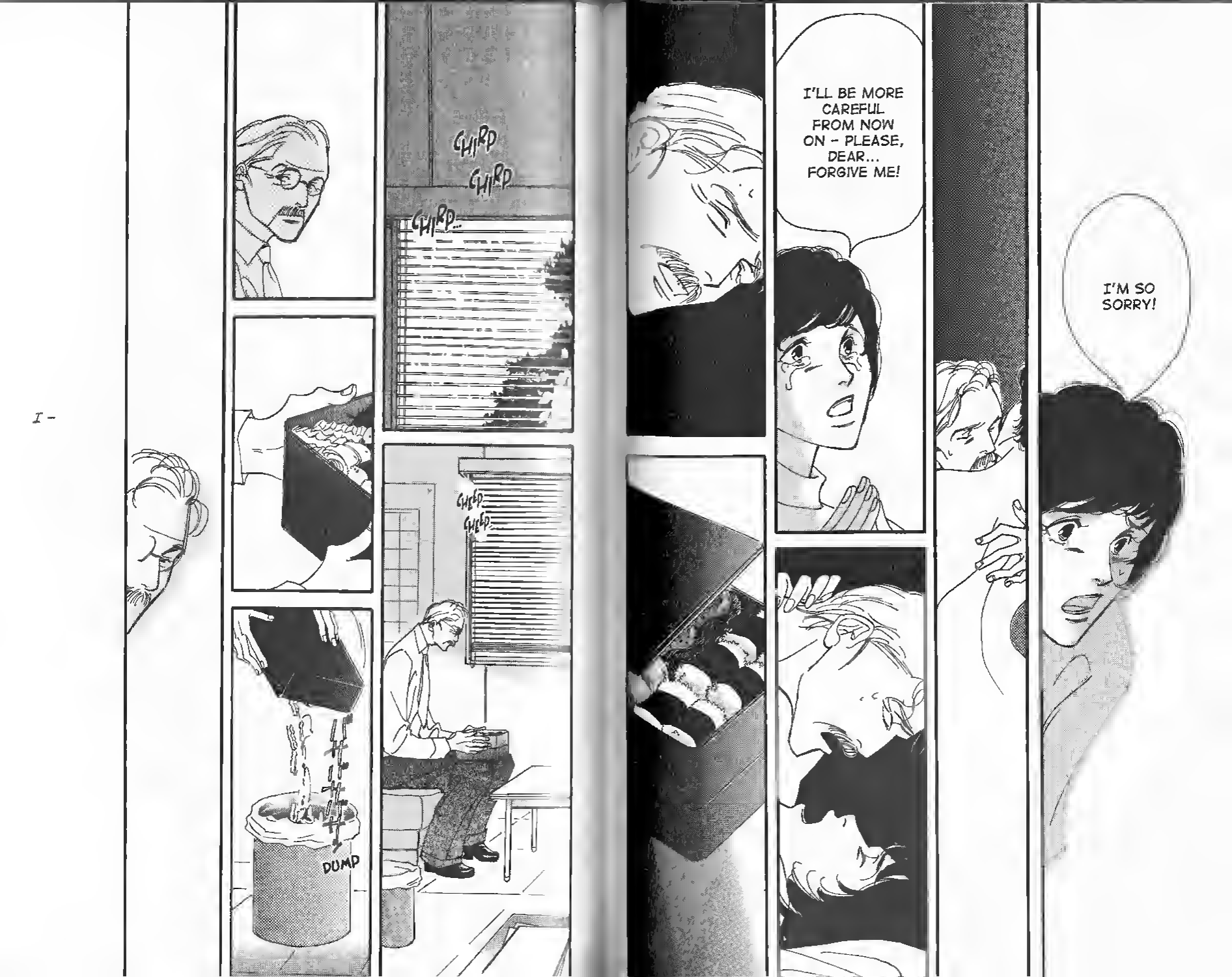
YOU DON'T LIKE IT...?

NO, NO – IT'S YOUR OWN HAIR... YOU'RE FREE TO DO WHATEVER YOU WISH WITH –
PLEASE FORGIVE ME!

*ALWAYS, ON NIGHTS AFTER SUCH INCIDENTS, SACHIKO WAS **ESPECIALLY** PASSIONATE...*

AND...

DESPITE MY AGE... SO WAS I.


CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP...
CHEEP
CHEEP
DUMP
I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL FROM NOW ON - PLEASE, DEAR... FORGIVE ME!
I'M SO SORRY!

HOW DO YOU DO – THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS BEING SO GOOD TO MY HUSBAND

PLEASE COME IN.

SO YOUNG!

WHAT A LOVELY WIFE YOU'VE GOT, PROFESSOR!

WOW!

...
...

HEY! GET A LOAD OF THIS PHOTO!

SHE WAS ALWAYS SO STYLISH, WITH A MISSONI SWEATER CASUALLY DRAPED OVER HER SHOULDERS...

YES, I REMEMBER! SO CHEERFUL AND SUCH A GOOD COOK, TOO... I LIKED HER.

HE AND HIS PREVIOUS WIFE WERE MORE LIKE FRIENDS...AFTER ALL, SHE WAS A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, TOO, AT A WOMAN'S COLLEGE.

SHE'S SO OLD-FASHIONED – THE COMPLETE *OPPOSITE* OF HIS PREVIOUS WIFE! "MY HUSBAND"?

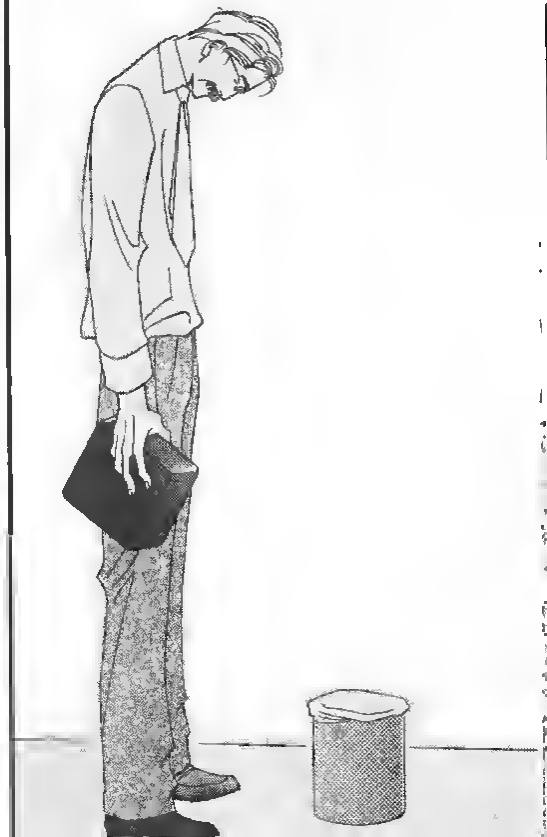
WHISPER

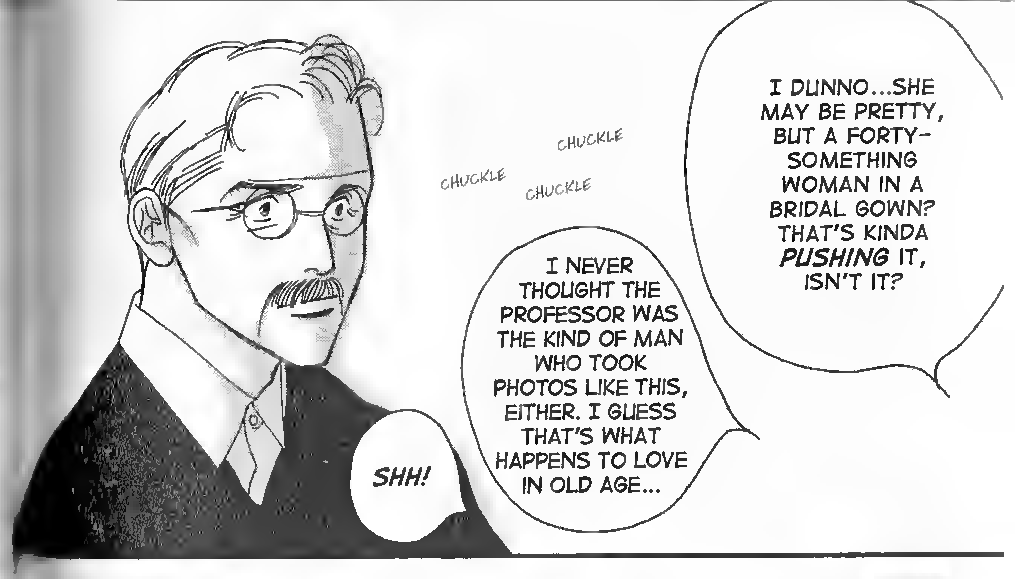
FLOOSH..

KCHAK

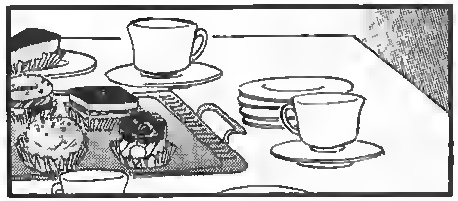
IT WAS AN ESTABLISHED CUSTOM FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD GRADUATED FROM MY SEMINAR TO COME VISIT ME ONE DAY OUT OF THE GOLDEN WEEK HOLIDAY.

...FOUND MYSELF TIRED OF LIVING WITH SACHIKO.

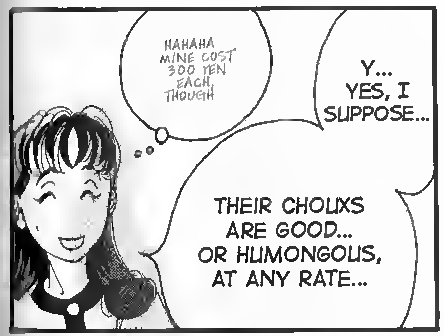


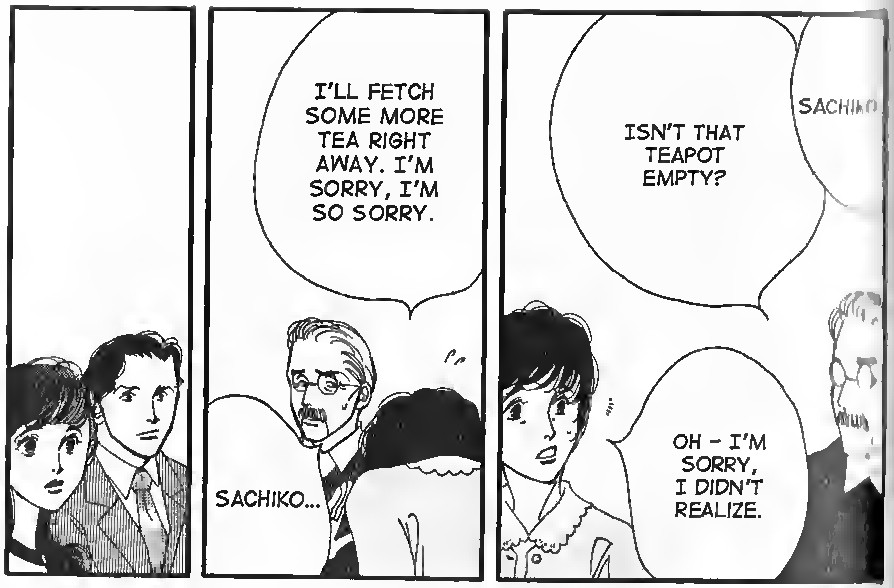

I DUNNO...SHE MAY BE PRETTY, BUT A FORTY-SOMETHING WOMAN IN A BRIDAL GOWN? THAT'S KINDA *PUSHING* IT, ISN'T IT?
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
CHUCKLE
I NEVER THOUGHT THE PROFESSOR WAS THE KIND OF MAN WHO TOOK PHOTOS LIKE THIS, EITHER. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS TO LOVE IN OLD AGE...
SHH!

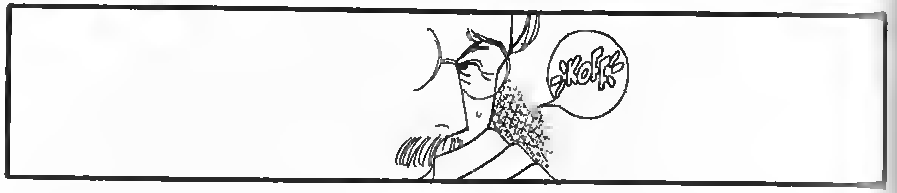
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
UM...DO YOU MEAN THE 100-YEN CHOUXS FROM THOSE CHAIN STORE BAKERIES YOU FIND IN FRONT OF THE TRAIN STATIONS?
HUH?

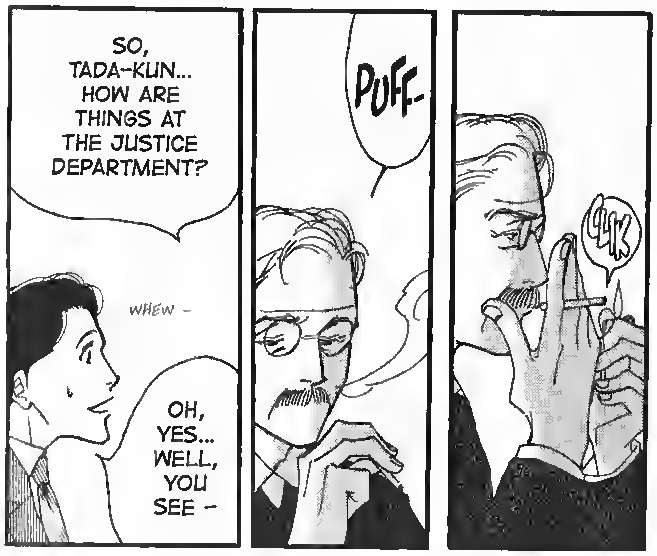


OH! I'M SO GLAD YOU LIKE IT. IT'S FROM A BAKERY IN AOYAMA.
THIS CHOUX CREAM IS DELICIOUS...!
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THE CHOUX CREAM FROM "COZY CORNER" TASTED THE BEST...I NEVER REALIZED THERE WERE OTHERS MORE DELICIOUS!

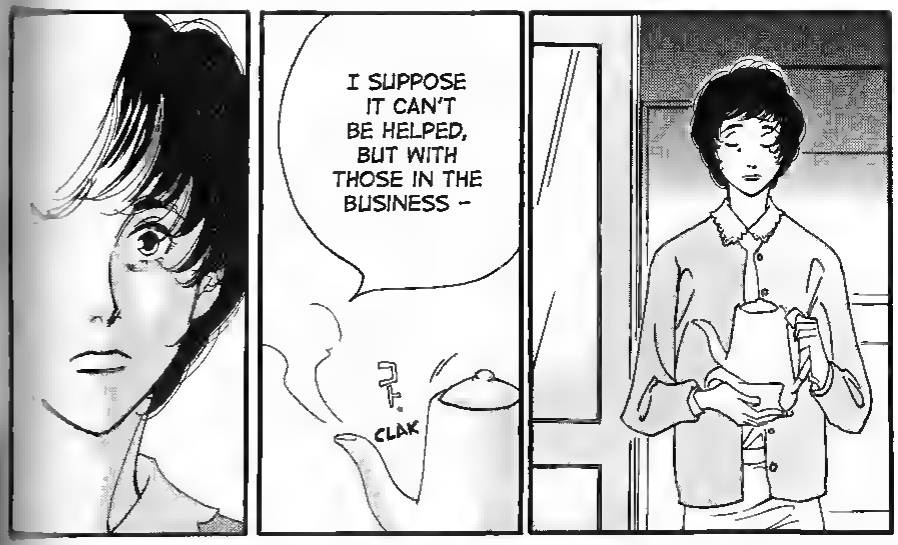








*IT WAS THEN THAT MY EYES LANDED ON THI CIGARETTES I SO SELDOM SMOKED. THIS WAS MY **MISTAKE**.*

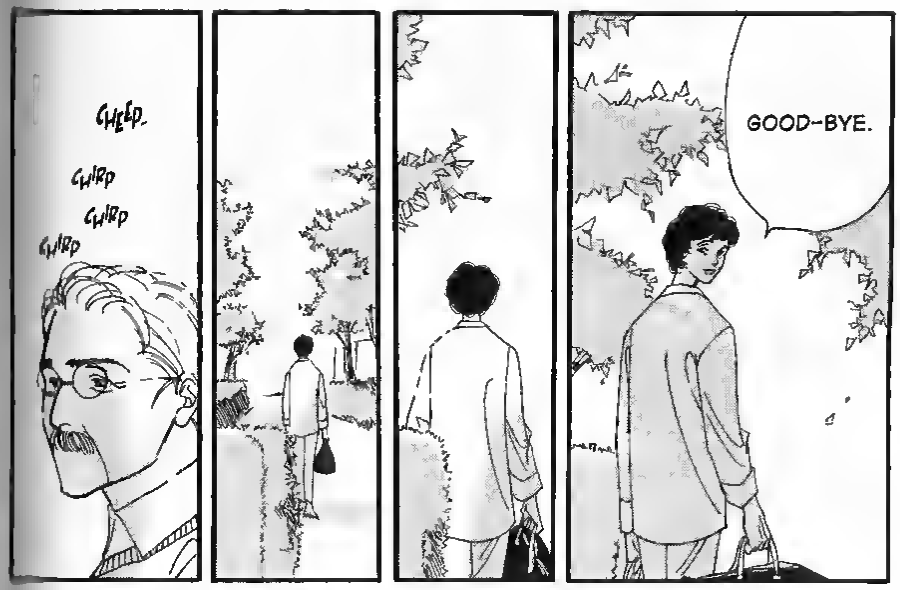


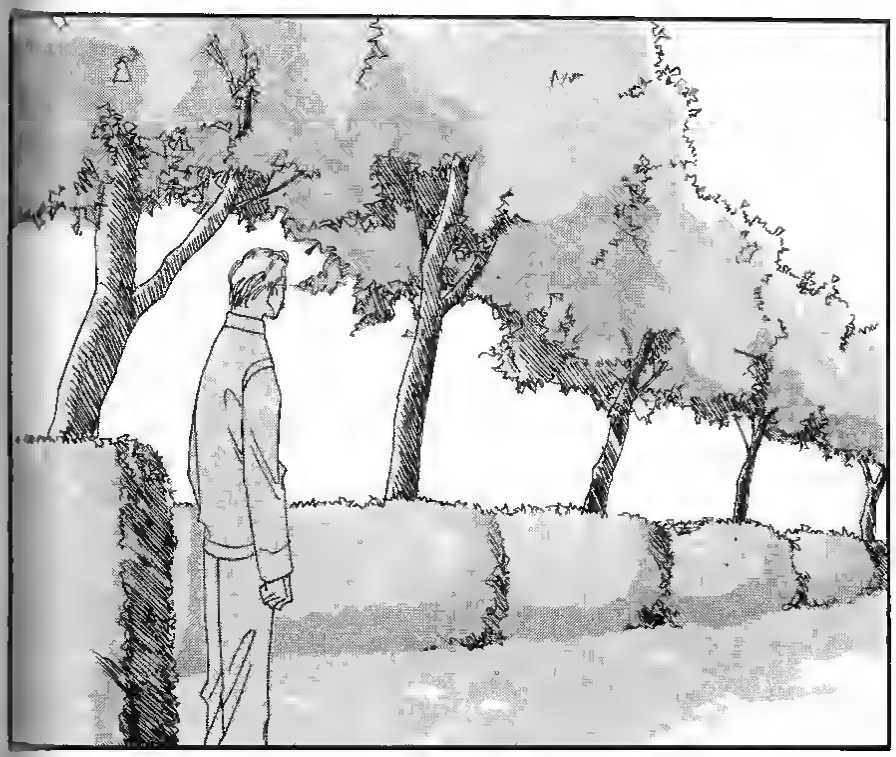
THAT'S RIGHT – THERE WAS NO ASHTRAY NEAR AT HAND.

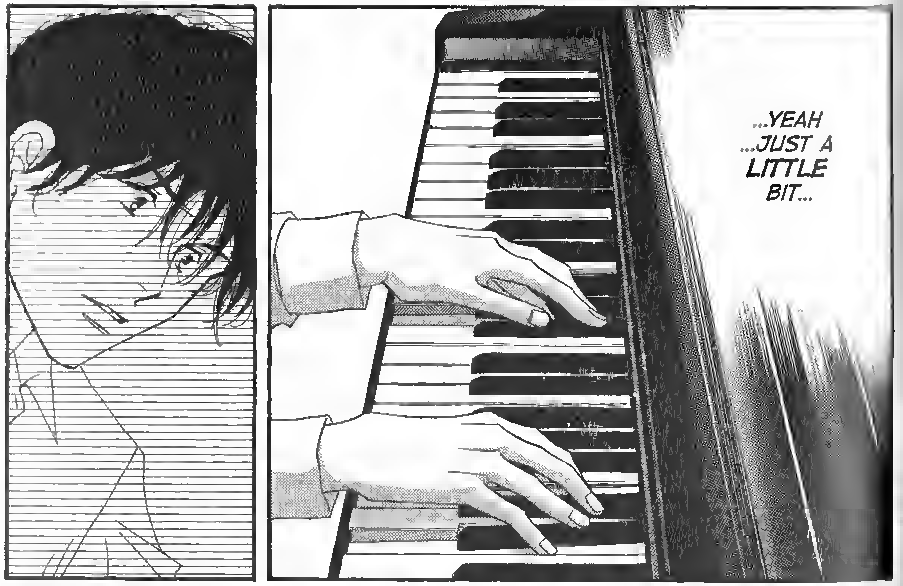
SACHIKO LEFT ONE DAY IN MAY.

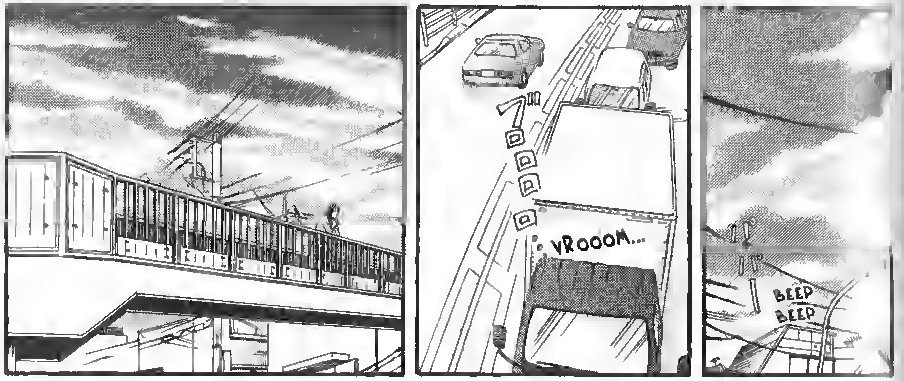
LET'S SPLIT UP.

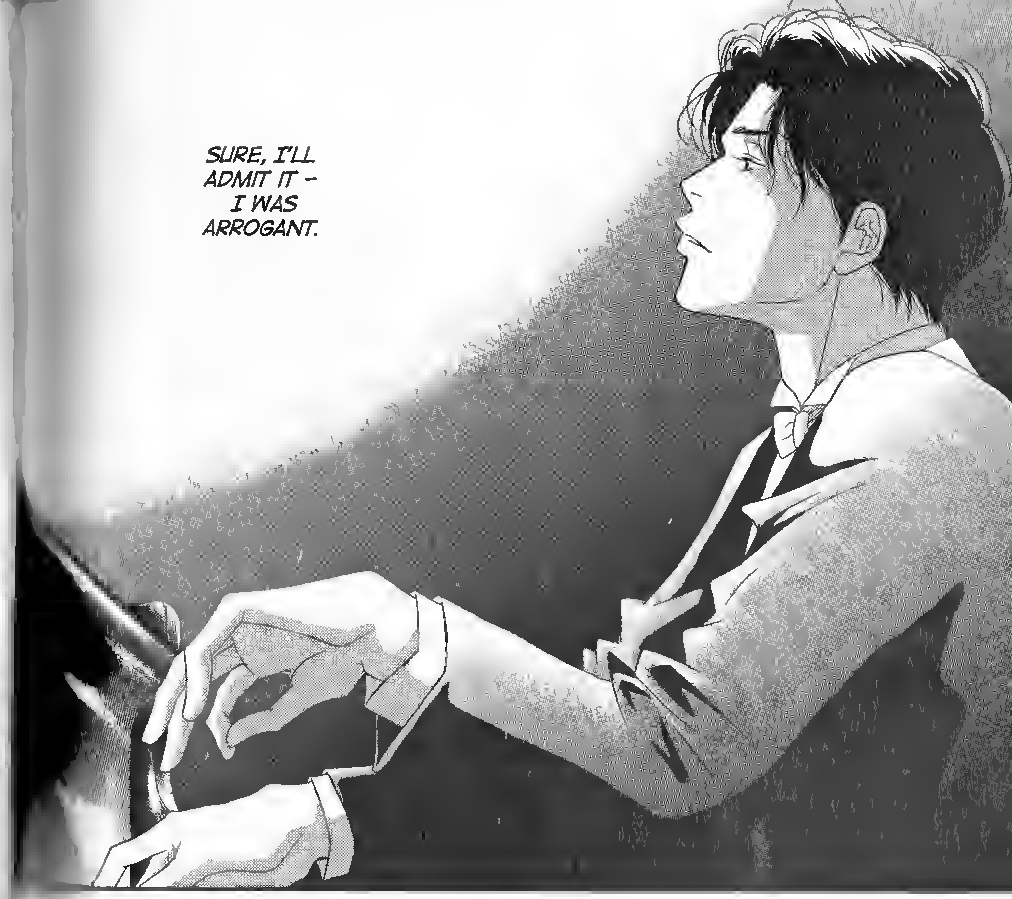
One
May
Day

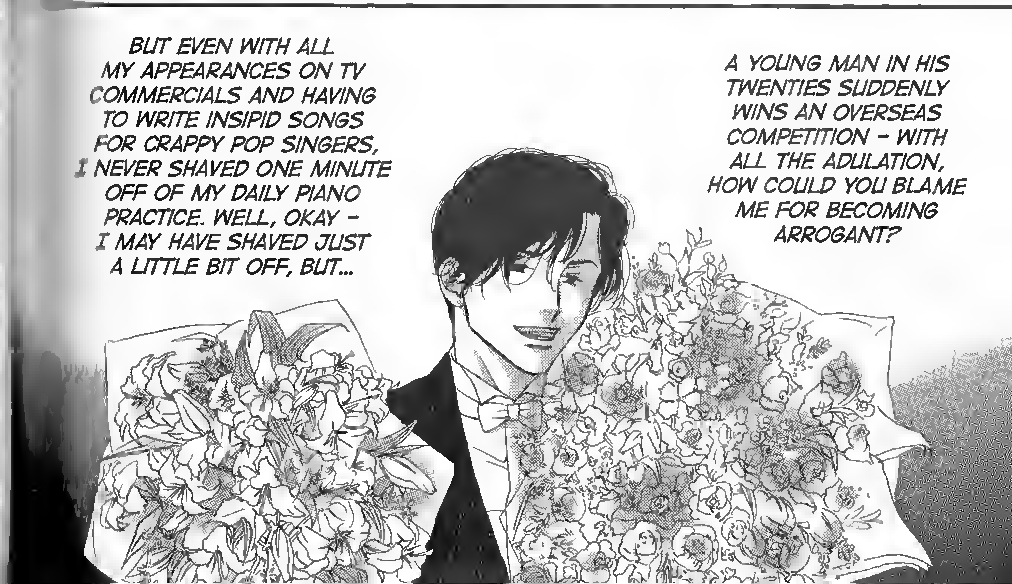

CHEEP.
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP
GOOD-BYE.




...YEAH
...JUST A
LITTLE
BIT...


VROOOM...
BEEP
BEEP

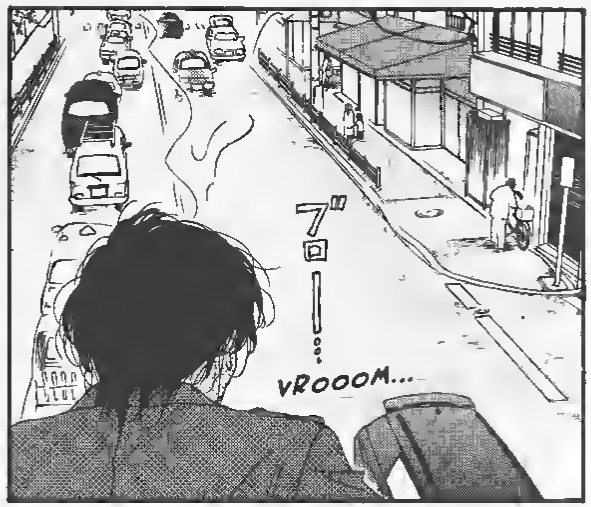

SURE, I'LL
ADMIT IT -
I WAS
ARROGANT.

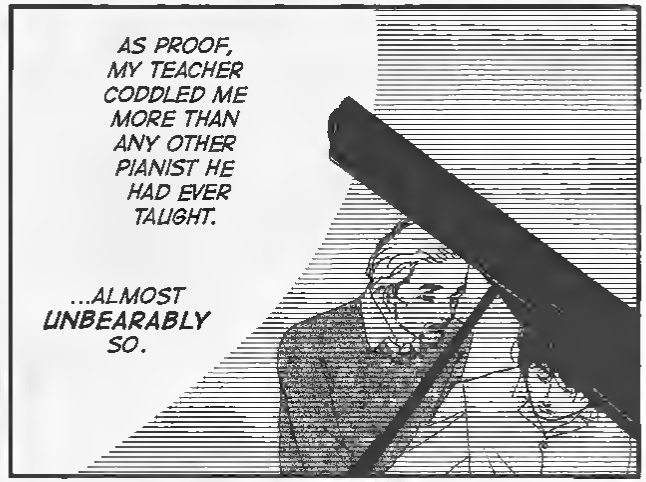

BUT EVEN WITH ALL
MY APPEARANCES ON TV
COMMERCIALS AND HAVING
TO WRITE INSIPID SONGS
FOR CRAPPY POP SINGERS,
I NEVER SHAVED ONE MINUTE
OFF OF MY DAILY PIANO
PRACTICE. WELL, OKAY -
I MAY HAVE SHAVED JUST
A LITTLE BIT OFF, BUT...
A YOUNG MAN IN HIS
TWENTIES SUDDENLY
WINS AN OVERSEAS
COMPETITION - WITH
ALL THE ADULATION,
HOW COULD YOU BLAME
ME FOR BECOMING
ARROGANT?

AT THAT TIME, EVEN THOSE WHO HAD NEVER HEARD A SINGLE BAR OF CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THEIR LIVES KNEW MY NAME.
A JAPANESE WHO HAS EARNED RESPECT OVERSEAS BECOMES A DARLING OF THE MEDIA. NOT TO MENTION, BACK THEN, I WAS YOUNG, HAUGHTY AND BEAUTIFUL.

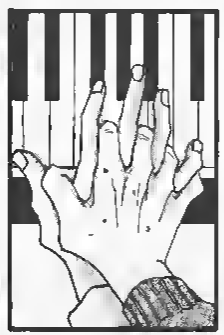
BACK THEN, MEN LINED UP IN FRONT OF ME, JUST WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO HOLD ME -
I NEVER LACKED FOR MEN.

I HAD THE TALENT. I REALLY DID.


VROOOM...


AS PROOF, MY TEACHER CODDLED ME MORE THAN ANY OTHER PIANIST HE HAD EVER TAUGHT.
...ALMOST UNBEARABLY SO.

OF COURSE, I ONLY SLEPT WITH



BUT LOOK AT ME NOW.
LET'S GIVE UP.
IT WAS ONLY A MOMEN-TARY DREAM.
I DROWNED MYSELF IN MY OWN FAME, AND THESE FINGERS THAT NEGLECTED THE KEYBOARD SOON RUSTED... BEFORE I KNEW IT, THE WORLD HAD FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT ME.
HI –
YOU WAITING FOR SOMEBODY?
I EVEN LOST MY STANDING AS A PIANIST. I STILL HAD MY LOOKS, BUT OF COURSE, THAT ONLY LASTED WHILE I WAS YOUNG
ABANDONED BY MY OWN TEACHER –

I'D BE DAMNED IF I WAS GOING TO ADMIT THAT THIS MAN'S FACE REPRESENTED MY CURRENT VALUE!
GOOD EVENING
ALONE?
ME, TOO.
SEE? I'VE STILL GOT IT.
MM –
OH...!

WHAT...?
?
UM...
UH -
...HUH?
...WERE YOU PLANNING ON HAVING ME BE ON TOP?
H...HEY, I'M SURE YOU'RE NOT -... YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, BUT...
GIMME A BREAK, OLD MAN - !
HEY, HEY, HEY, HEY -
YIKES...

I SUGGEST YOU PAY FOR ONE.
BUT IF YOU'RE STILL THINKING, "OH I WANNA BE HELD IN THE ARMS OF A PRETTY YOUNG BOY," THEN -
I'M SURE YOU REALIZE IT YOURSELF, DON'T YOU? IF YOU WANNA BE THE BOTTOM AT YOUR AGE, THEN FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER OLD GEEZER LIKE YOU, MAN!
-!
ALL THAT'S LEFT TO ME NOW ARE AN OLD GRAND PIANO AND A CRUMBLING, DILAPIDATED OLD HOUSE.
...
...
THAT YOUNGSTER IS NOWHERE NEAR AS HANDSOME AS I WAS AT HIS AGE! HOW DARE HE!
DAMN HIM, I'LL BE DAMNED IF I PAY A CENT, DAMMIT - !
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF

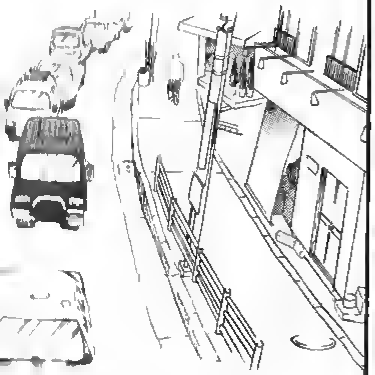
UM...
ARRGH - DAMMIT -... IF ONLY SOME YOUNG, HANDSOME LAD WOULD TAKE PITY ON A DEPRESSED, TRAGIC GUY LIKE ME AND COME TALK TO ME...!
UM...!

U...
UM..
UM..
I WAS JUST THINKING...
...HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE...
Y..
YOU'RE ALWAYS OUT HERE SMOKING AT THIS TIME, AREN'T YOU?
SO -
UM...
BUT I REMEMBERED THAT I HAD THIS CARTON MY FRIEND GAVE ME WHEN I LET HIM CRASH AT MY PLACE ONCE -
YOU SEE, I JUST RECENTLY QUIT SMOKING MYSELF.
JOKING, JUST A JOKE
...I WISH.

THANK YOU...
NO..
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
WELL, THEN!
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU SO SUDDENLY!

...
...
...
...
PLEASE TAKE IT.
SO, HERE -
LURK
OH - NO, NO, NO! I'LL TAKE IT! I'LL GLADLY TAKE IT!
OH!
IT'S WEIRD! THIS IS WEIRD, ISN'T IT?! NEVER MIND!
...THANKS.
THIS IS JUST MY BRAND, TOO.
I'LL TAKE IT.

FUNNY THING - THE INSIPID POP TUNE I WROTE OFF-HANDEDLY SO LONG AGO BECAME A LEGENDARY HIT SENSATION, NOT THANKS TO ME BUT TO THE ARTIST WHO SANG IT, AND I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET BY ON THE ROYALTIES.



AND JUST WHEN I THINK THOSE ROYALTIES ARE FINALLY GOING TO DRY UP AND THE END IS NIGH, SUDDENLY SOME OTHER ARTIST DECIDES TO DO A COVER VERSION AND IT BECOMES A REVIVAL HIT...

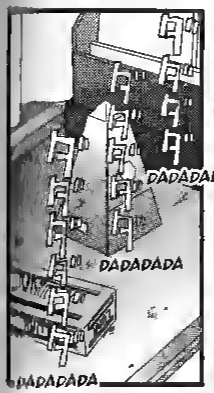
YOU'D THINK I COULD STARVE TO DEATH AT ANY TIME, BUT -

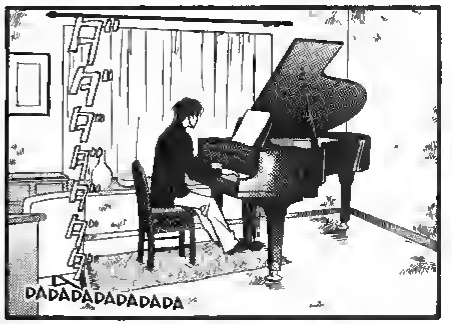
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT RECENTLY, ITS USAGE IN RINGTONES AND KARAOKE BRINGS IN A THIN BUT STEADY TRICKLE OF REVENUE AS WELL.

BUT JUST WHEN AM I FINALLY GOING TO GET MY WISH?

HELLO.

OTHER THAN THAT, I DO NOTHING.



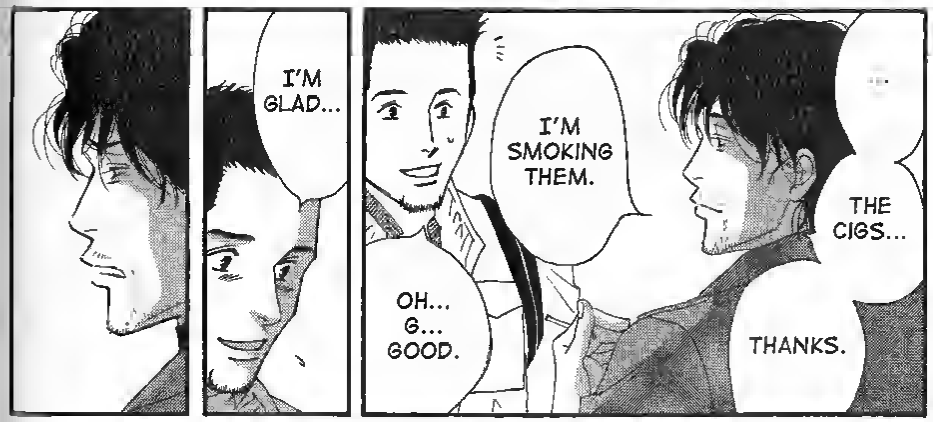


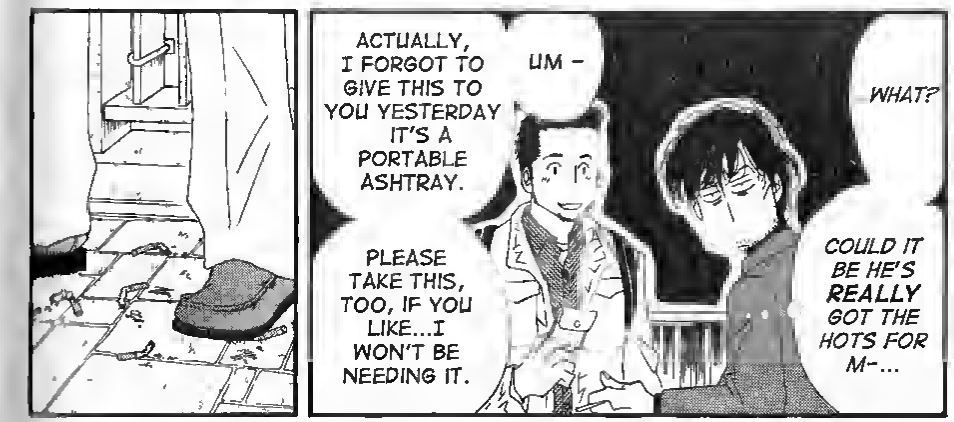
I PLAY THE PIANO EIGHT HOURS EACH DAY.

DO YOU HAVE PLANS AFTER THIS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?
UM –
THAT IS –
IF YOU'RE FREE...
YES! PLEASE DO!
OKAY, I'LL TAKE THAT, TOO, THEN.
...
...

S...SO SUDDEN?! AND IT'S STILL BARELY SUNSET!
BUT... BUT I CAN'T HOLD BACK ANYMORE...!
OH...DON'T BE SO OVEREAGER... WHAT ARE YOU DOING...?

OH...
HI.
WE MEET AGAIN.
UM...

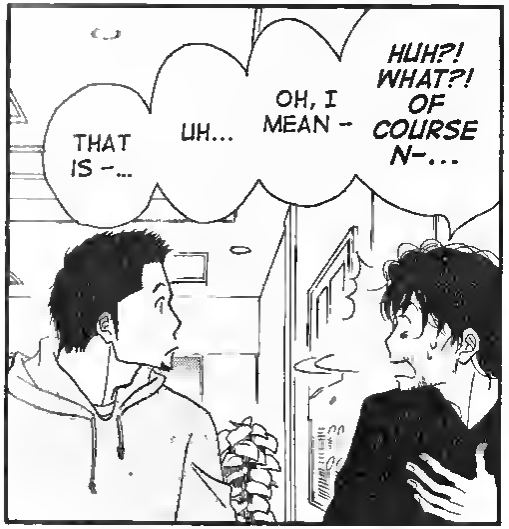

I'M GLAD...
OH... G... GOOD.
I'M SMOKING THEM.
THE CIGS...
THANKS.


ACTUALLY, I FORGOT TO GIVE THIS TO YOU YESTERDAY IT'S A PORTABLE ASHTRAY.
PLEASE TAKE THIS, TOO, IF YOU LIKE...I WON'T BE NEEDING IT.
UM –
WHAT?
COULD IT BE HE'S REALLY GOT THE HOTS FOR M-...

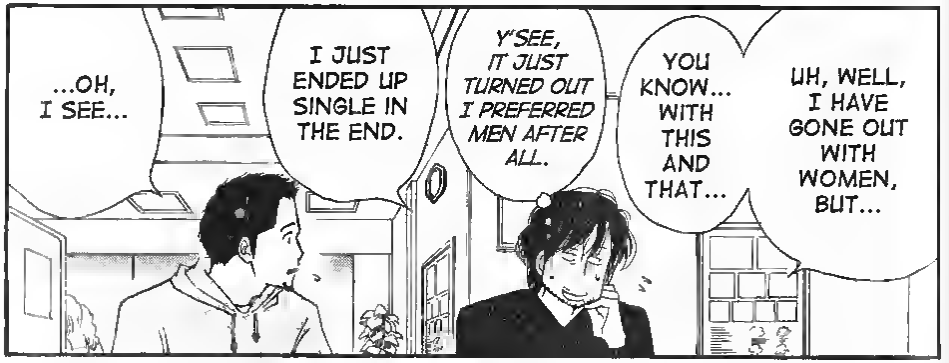
HE TOLD ME HE'S A COMMERCIAL SCIENCES STUDENT, AND THAT HE HAS A PART-TIME JOB IN THIS AREA.
NO, NOT ONCE.
UHH...
CREAK

MY NAME'S RYOICHI YABUKI.
LIKE I SAID - JUST A JOKE.
SO IT'S NOT AS IF HE'S AN OLD FAN OF MINE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT...YEAH, OF COURSE NOT.
?
FORGET IT, IT'S NOTHING. I'M DATE LIKE MASAMUNE DATE.
HUH?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE NAME TAKA-YUKI DATE?
...
HUH? REALLY?
IN FACT, YOUR NAME SOUNDS MORE LIKE AN ACTOR'S OR SOMETHING.
...NOT REALLY.
I'M SURE SOME-BODY'S TOLD YOU THAT BEFORE.
SO IT'S DATE-SAN.
THAT'S A COOL NAME.

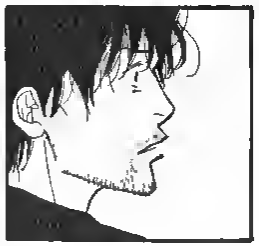
OH...I DID, BUT WE BROKE UP RECENTLY.
HANGING AROUND HERE EVERY DAY...DON'T YOU EVEN HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?

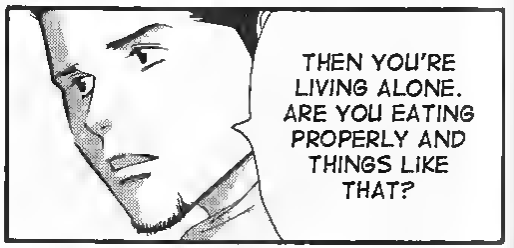

THAT IS -...
UH...
OH, I MEAN -
HUH?! WHAT?! OF COURSE N-...

DON'T YOU HAVE A WIFE, DATE-SAN?
I KNEW IT... SO HE DOESN'T SWING THAT WAY...


...OH, I SEE...
I JUST ENDED UP SINGLE IN THE END.
Y'SEE, IT JUST TURNED OUT I PREFERRED MEN AFTER ALL.
YOU KNOW... WITH THIS AND THAT...
UH, WELL, I HAVE GONE OUT WITH WOMEN, BUT...

WHICH IS HE?



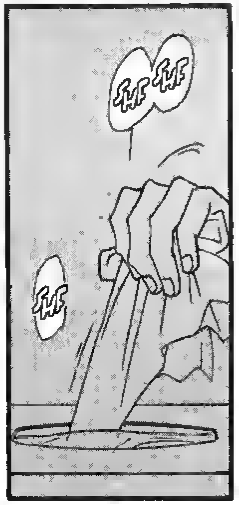

THEN YOU'RE LIVING ALONE. ARE YOU EATING PROPERLY AND THINGS LIKE THAT?

UH - UH - UH - ...!
UNH!
DATE-SAN...!

NN! NN! NN! NN! NN!

LET ME... SUCK YOU...
HEY...

I DECIDED TO PUT A FEELER OUT THE NEXT DAY.

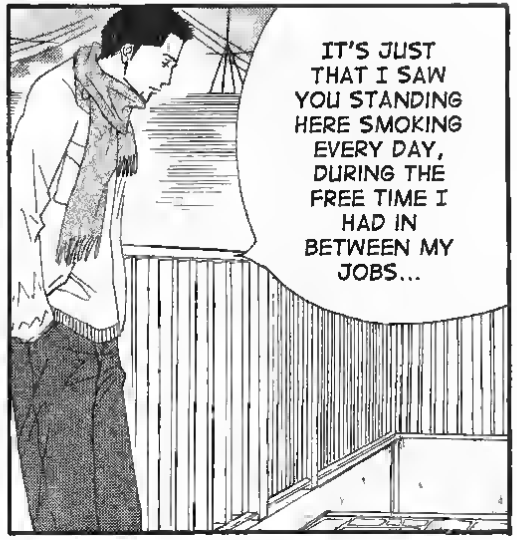


OH...!

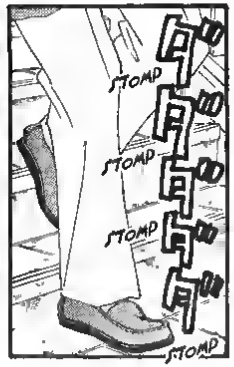
どきゅん
ZING!
I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO GO HOME...
EVEN IF I DO GO HOME, I CAN'T EVEN TURN ON THE LIGHTS BECAUSE OF ALL THE CREDITORS THAT COME...
HEY!
WHAT'S WITH THAT LINE?! ARE YOU PROPOSITIONING ME?! HUH?!
I QUIT MY COLLEGE TODAY.
I'M MOVING AWAY TOMORROW.
SO YOU SEE, TODAY WILL BE THE LAST DAY I'LL BE ABLE TO MEET WITH YOU, DATE-SAN.
I GUESS I WAS NAÏVE, THINKING I COULD PAY BACK MY PARENTS' DEBTS WITH ONLY PART-TIME JOBS.. I HAVE TO FIND PROPER WORK.

DON'T YOU DO ANY SPORTS OR STUFF LIKE THAT?
OHHH... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
I USED TO, BUT IT WAS RUGBY – GIRLS DON'T LIKE THAT AT ALL.
YOU'RE POPULAR, AREN'T YOU? I'M SURE YOU'LL GET ANOTHER GIRL SOON.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT... I GUESS IT IS KIND OF EMPTY JUST GOING BACK AND FORTH FROM SCHOOL TO WORK.
BESIDES, I DON'T PLAY ANYMORE.
IF ONLY I CAN GET THAT OUT OF HIM, I'LL MAKE MY DECISION, TOO.
DADADADA
DADADADA
WHICH IS HE? IS HE INTERESTED IN ME OR NOT? IF HE ISN'T, WHY DID HE COME UP AND TALK TO ME?

THIS IS IT.


IT'S JUST THAT I SAW YOU STANDING HERE SMOKING EVERY DAY, DURING THE FREE TIME I HAD IN BETWEEN MY JOBS...

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK! THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO GIVE YOU - WAIT RIGHT HERE!
HUH?
WAIT HERE A MINUTE!
HEY!

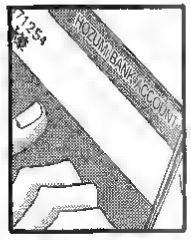

STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

THIS IS THE KIND OF PERSON I'VE BEEN WAITING TO MEET.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU...!
...THIS.
PANT
PANT
GASP
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

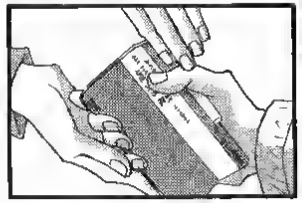
STOMP!

I NEVER TOLD YOU, BUT I'M ACTUALLY EXTREMELY WEALTHY!
IT'S ALRIGHT! THERE'S NOT THAT MUCH ANYWAY!
...! I CAN'T TAKE THAT FROM YOU, DATE-SAN!



TAKE IT, AS A FAVOR TO ME.
PLEASE...

PLEASE!



...I'M SORRY.

...I WAS FOND OF YOU, AND WANTED TO DO MY BEST FOR YOU AS WELL, BUT I GUESS MY POWER WAS LACKING, TOO...

A SOLOIST IS NOT THE ONLY TYPE OF PIANIST THERE IS, DATE-KUN.

YET, YOU REALLY TRIED...AND THROUGH HOURS OF SHEDING BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS, YOU ADMIRABLY MANAGED TO WIN A COMPETITION.

BUT RATHER THAN ADMIT THAT I'M JUST A PATHETIC LOSER CLINGING TO USELESS DEDICATION, IT'S SO MUCH BETTER TO PRETEND THAT I'M A DEBAUCHED, FALLEN GENIUS, JUST FADING AWAY...

IT'S BEEN CONFIRMED TO ME, EVERY DAY, FOR THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. NO MATTER HOW I TRIED, MY FINGERS WOULD NEVER PRODUCE THE TONE I WANTED TO HEAR.

I KNOW THAT, TEACHER.

YOU'VE NEVER SLACKED ON YOUR PRACTICE TIME. EVEN WHILE YOU WERE THE DARLING OF THE MEDIA YOU NEVER WAVERED, AND DID NOTHING BUT SPEND YOUR LIFE FACING THE KEYBOARD.

I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE...

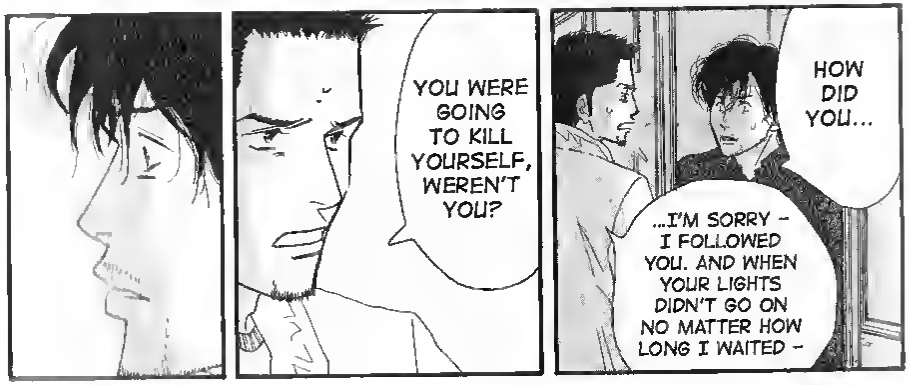
...DATE-KUN, I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW YOU WANT TO BELIEVE IT'S FROM A LACK OF PRACTICE, BUT -

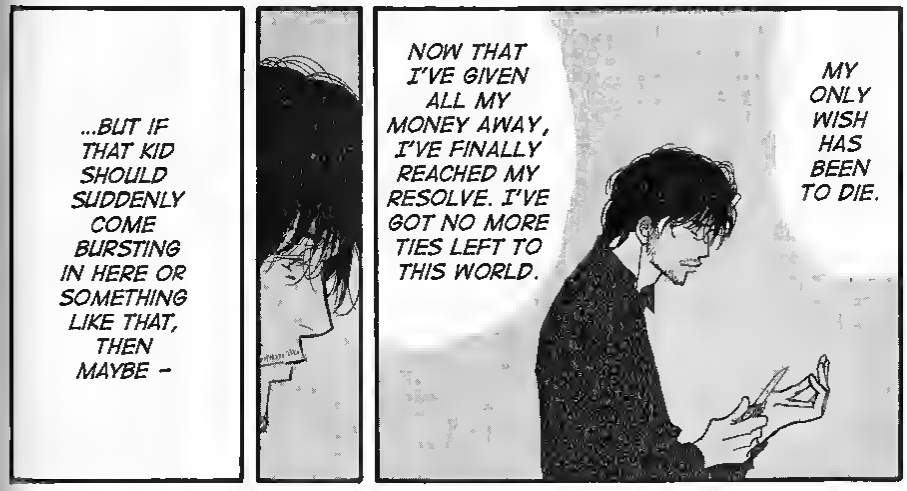
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM.

I'M AFRAID YOU JUST WEREN'T BORN WITH THE TALENT TO BECOME A TRUE PIANIST.

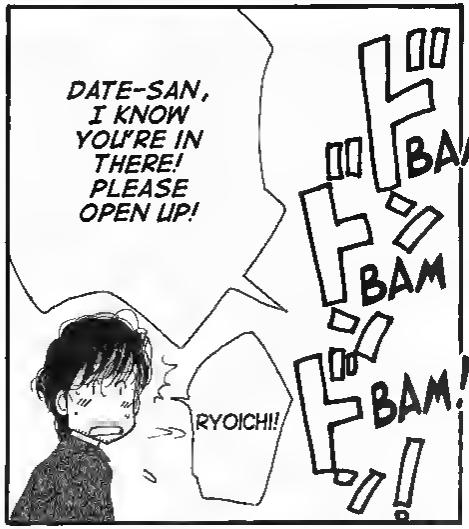
PLNG...

DATE-SAN, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE! PLEASE OPEN UP!
IMPOSSIBLE...!

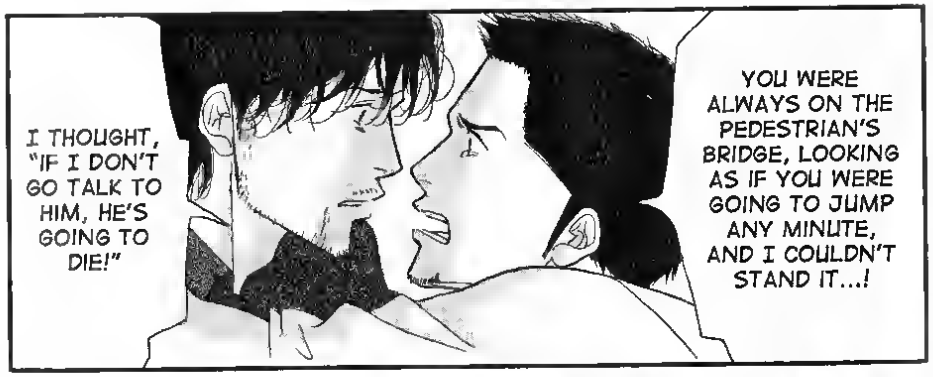

YOU WERE GOING TO KILL YOURSELF, WEREN'T YOU?
HOW DID YOU...
...I'M SORRY - I FOLLOWED YOU. AND WHEN YOUR LIGHTS DIDN'T GO ON NO MATTER HOW LONG I WAITED -


...BUT IF THAT KID SHOULD SUDDENLY COME BURSTING IN HERE OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, THEN MAYBE -
NOW THAT I'VE GIVEN ALL MY MONEY AWAY, I'VE FINALLY REACHED MY RESOLVE. I'VE GOT NO MORE TIES LEFT TO THIS WORLD.
MY ONLY WISH HAS BEEN TO DIE.

OH...HOW COULD I DO SUCH A -...!
I'VE NEVER FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A MAN BEFORE, BUT YOU... YOU...!
I CAN'T JUST TAKE YOUR MONEY WITHOUT HAVING DONE ANYTHING IN RETURN! PLEASE LET ME REPAY YOU WITH MY BODY!


DATE-SAN, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE! PLEASE OPEN UP!
RYOICHI!!
BAM
BAM
BAM!

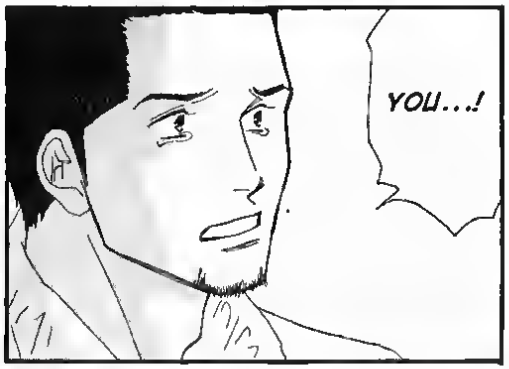
BUT IF ONLY I COULD HAVE DONE IT WITH A YOUNG, HANDSOME GUY LIKE HIM, JUST ONCE BEFORE THE END...
SO UNLIKELY
NO WAY.
BAM!
BAM


I THOUGHT, "IF I DON'T GO TALK TO HIM, HE'S GOING TO DIE!"
YOU WERE ALWAYS ON THE PEDESTRIAN'S BRIDGE, LOOKING AS IF YOU WERE GOING TO JUMP ANY MINUTE, AND I COULDN'T STAND IT...!

DATE-SAN... THE SIGHT OF YOUR BACK, WHILE YOU WERE SMOKING... IT LOOKED JUST LIKE MY FATHER'S... THAT'S WHY I - ...!

MY FATHER!
Y...
YOUR FATHER ...?

BECAUSE... YOU...!
I CAN TELL!
SLAM!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...


YOU...!

YOU HAD THE SAME LOOK ON YOUR FACE AS MY FATHER DID BEFORE HE DIED!
THE LOOK HE HAD ON HIS FACE THAT MORNING, THE DAY HE JUMPED IN FRONT OF A TRAIN...!

From the creator of
ANTIQUE BAKERY

A Duet Like No Other...

Solfege

Written & Illustrated by:
Fumi Yoshinaga

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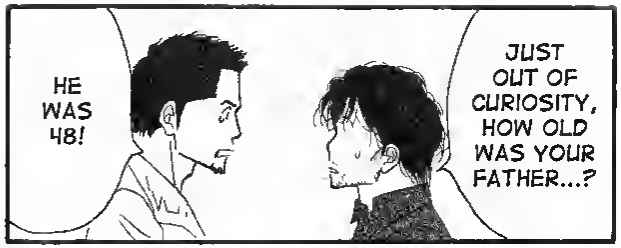

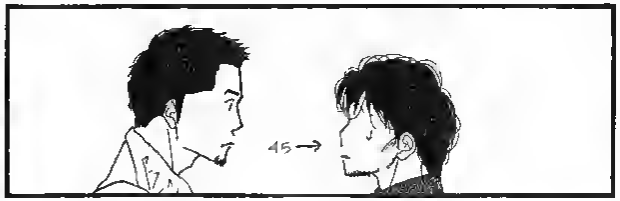

...GUESS I'LL BECOME A PIANO TEACHER OR SOMETHING.